

**IRAN, IRAQ, AND THE UNITED STATES:
THE NEW TRIANGLE'S IMPACT ON
SECTARIANISM
AND THE NUCLEAR THREAT**

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FOREWORD

Many observers are concerned about the best means of discouraging sectarian conflict in Iraq while still waging counterinsurgency efforts. Another tension between regional policy goals concerns American and Iraqi desires to constrain growing Iranian influence in Iraq, and in the region as a whole, and advocating more scrutiny over transnational dealings and control over weapons proliferation, while also promoting peaceful co-existence and stricter observance of sovereignty in the Middle East. One pole around which these tensions circumbulate is the tensions between Sunni and Shi'a political and religious entities. Bilateral state relations are one level of consideration, to which must be added American concerns and those of other nations of the region. This monograph explores the various doctrinal, historical, and political facets of these issues.

The analysis and recommendations offered here by Dr. Sherifa Zuhur are intended to contribute to the debate over these issues, and hopefully clarify some of the underlying questions for those who follow new developments in these issue areas.


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SUMMARY

What is the best possible response to growing Iranian influence in Iraq? How does this issue relate to the crisis over Iran's efforts to obtain nuclear capabilities? Can the United States leverage one issue against the other, offering Iran incentives to shift down its nuclear program and, at the same time, withhold judgment on that country's influence in Iraq? Or are these concerns best dealt with separately from the American policy perspective? Beyond American foreign policy and policy analysis, European, Arab, Israeli, Russian, and Chinese interests are factors in the new equation.

Perhaps there is no optimal response to an Iran determined to acquire nuclear capabilities, nor to an Iraqi Shi'i revival fostered or enhanced by Iranian "soft power." Still, to understand the dire predictions about the growth of Shi'a power, or to offer constructive advice about the trilateral relations of Iran, Iraq, and the United States, we must consider Iraqi-Iranian popular, religious, and state-level dynamics. If we appreciate the strongly varying interests and political experience of the Shi'a of Iraq and Iran, our fears of the dire scenarios predicted in the Arab world may diminish.

Iran and Iraq historically have influenced and threatened each other. However, the triangle of U.S.-Iraq-Iran relations outweighs the two Middle Eastern states' bilateral history, their contrasting political aims, respective grievances, and competition. Now, Iran's nuclear ambitions cast a shadow on the future of both countries, the Arabian Gulf states, Israel, and American forces and facilities in the region.

European efforts to extend incentives to Iran so that it would cease uranium enrichment contrasted with

the American administration's initial approach to the dilemma. The U.S. offer to join multistate negotiations with Iran in June 2006, breaking with 27 years of official silence, was conditional on Iran's promise to give up uranium enrichment. Yet, European nations already had attempted negotiations with Iran in lieu of its compliance with International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) conditions.

Are these differing approaches to diplomacy the outcome or a reflection of varying responses to the war in Iraq? Does the American posture stem from long-time anger over the 1979 hostage crisis? Its projection for Iran in the "New Middle East"? European nations sometimes claim to be more knowledgeable about the Middle East than the United States due to their first-hand experiences in the colonial and Mandate eras and their lengthier tradition of Oriental studies. Possibly this could enhance their pragmatism, resignation, diplomatic skills, or policy approaches to Middle Eastern democratization, or the issue of proliferation. European nations also may be more sanguine about the potential for containing radical Islam in the region than the United States is.

When regime change in Iraq became a certainty, nearly all observers realized that the Shi'a of Iraq could only gain political influence in a new government organized on a representational basis. Leading figures in the Arab world, as well as some Westerners, sounded the alarm on Iran's goals in a weakened Iraq. In some cases, their charges proceed from the claim that Shi'a influence or Iranian-style militant fundamentalism has increased throughout the region. The Shi'a, in Iraq as elsewhere in the Middle East and Central Asia, have been accused of being Iranian agents.¹ But some believe, like Reuel Marc Gerecht, resident scholar at the

American Enterprise Institute, that Iraqi nationalism provides the best defense against undue Iranian influence. Or, that foreign nations have other reasons for calling “wolf” in Iraq, namely, their Iran policies.²

One even hears that the Shi’a could be a positive force offsetting or detracting from radical Sunni salafism. This idea stands in stark contrast to the vision of Iraq as a future Islamic Republic, or at least, the breeding ground of a new Hizbullah. Some observers, like Thomas Friedman, foreign affairs columnist at the *New York Times*, urge others not to make too much of an Iranian bogeyman, pointing out that Iran had and will continue to have influence in Iraq, but that it is the Shi’i Iraqis whose status had been transformed.³

In contrast, Iran’s political system has not changed, and there is probably little hope for encouraging reform from afar. In fact, Islamic revolutionary values are being reinvigorated by the new President, Mahmud Ahmadinejad. Has he become a lightening rod for populist sentiment in Iran, a catalyst for anti-American and anti-Western grievances? Under his leadership, and that of a young Iraqi government struggling with daily crises, how will these two very important situations play out and what sorts of resulting risks and threats may be anticipated in the future?⁴

ENDNOTES

1. Craig Gordon cites General George Casey on Iranian and Hizbollah training of Iraqi insurgents. “Iran Cited as Threat in Iraq,” *Newsday.com*, June 23, 2006; Raymond Tanter, “Iran’s Threat to Coalition Forces in Iraq,” Washington, DC: Institute for Near East Policy, January 15, 2004.

2. Reuel Marc Gerecht, “Will Iran Win the Iraq War?” *Wall Street Journal*, December 14, 2004; Mahan Abedin, “Britain, Iran Playing with Iraqi Shi’ite Fire,” *Asia Times*, October 1, 2005, www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/GJ22Ak01.html.

3. Thomas Friedman, "A Political Arabesque," *New York Times*, December 19, 2004.

4. The informational cut-off date for this monograph was August 1, 2006. It was written between January and June 2006.

IRAN, IRAQ, AND THE UNITED STATES: THE NEW TRIANGLE'S IMPACT ON SECTARIANISM AND THE NUCLEAR THREAT

INTRODUCTION

Many observers are doubly concerned by the growing Iranian influence in Iraq and Iran's announced determination to develop nuclear capabilities. Is there an optimal way for the United States to respond to either issue, or both? The linkage of these issues affects Iran's neighbors, other Arab states, European nations, Russia, and China. A single example may be seen in British charges of an Iranian hand in the bombs that killed British soldiers in southern Iraq reported by the BBC. The "evidence" concerned similarities to Hizbullah-wielded devices. The correspondent drew a conclusion and then asked a loaded question. First, he noted that Iranian-British diplomacy was at such a low as a result of stalemate on the nuclear issue that the Foreign Office did not muzzle such accusations (which are rampant in Iraq). The question concerned which foreign powers know how Hizbullah makes a bomb.¹ Other accusations focus on Iranian connections with Shi'a militias, insurgents in Iraq, or that Iranian religious officials are infiltrating Iraq and spreading a more militant version of Shi'ism.²

In fact, there may not be a "best response" to the question of Iranian or Shi'a soft and hard power, but in order to select the least dangerous path forward, we must first understand Iran's influence on Iraq, Iran's national self-image, and the fears of neighboring countries regarding their minority populations, or Iraq and American influence there.

Iran and Iraq historically have influenced and threatened each other. However, the triangle of U.S.-Iraq-Iran relations now overshadows the two Middle Eastern states' bilateral history, their contrasting political aims, respective grievances, and competition. Iran's decision to pursue the development of nuclear technology further complicates the relationship between the three states. In addition, European efforts to extend incentives to Iran so that it would cease uranium enrichment contrasted with the American administration's approach to the same situation. Is this an outcome of differing approaches to the war in Iraq? Does it express long-standing American anger with Iran? Or have the Europeans adopted an essentially different attitude to Middle Eastern affairs in general that is based on their economic interests, and extends to questions of proliferation or democratization in the region?

When regime change in Iraq became a certainty, all informed observers realized that the Iraqi Shi'a population would gain political influence in a government organized on a representational basis. Many are comfortable saying that the Shi'a of Iraq represent about 60 percent of the population. But in fact, it is quite possible that they make up much closer to 70 percent. Because of 1) the nature of political development and organization in Iraq throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries, 2) the American alliances forged with Iraqi opposition groups prior to spring 2003, 3) the emphasis put on communitarian representation, and 4) outlawing the Ba`th party, Shi'a religious parties and clerics hold more influence in Iraq than ever.³

The prominence of Islamist actors and ideas, whether Shi'i or Sunni, is reflected in public opinion.

Many Iraqis state that Islamic parties and values should be represented.⁴ Not all Shi'a agree on the separation of religion and state, but more Shi'i Iraqis supported Islamist parties and principles in the December 2005 elections than secularist figures like former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. Voters in the city of Hillah said, "The important thing is to satisfy God," and "We're with the *marja'iyya*," meaning that they had voted for the United Iraqi Alliance because they believed the Shi'ite religious leadership based in Najaf endorsed that list.⁵ Secularism has declined in Iraq in this community, possibly through peer pressure.⁶ Iraq is not unique in this respect as was demonstrated in the Saudi 2005 municipal elections and parliamentary elections in Egypt and the Palestinian Authority. Nonetheless, even religious Shi'i politicians represent a range of views about political Islam and its future in Iraq.

Quite a few figures, including King Abdullah of Jordan, charged Iran with electoral fraud and undue influence in Iraq, and they referred to a potential Shi'a crescent of power in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon that would "alter the balance of power between the two main Islamic sects and pose new challenges to U.S. interests and allies."⁷ Gulf leaders feared that such an outcome would, or already had, stirred up their own Shi'a populations, whether a minority as in Saudi Arabia,⁸ or a majority as in Bahrain.⁹ Prince Saud, Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt also expressed their concerns about the Shi'a of Iraq and Iran's intentions toward the country. Mubarak declared, "The Shiites are always loyal to Iran. Most of them are loyal to Iran and not to the countries in which they live."¹⁰ These public statements reflect anti-Shi'a and anti-Iranian sentiment

that predominates in the Arab Middle East and some discontent with U.S. Iraq policies.

Egypt, Tunisia, and Saudi Arabia all blamed Iran for fomenting Islamist opposition at the very least, if not more directly charging the country for inciting radicalism in their own (Egypt), funding opposition movements (Tunisia), and unleashing violence (Saudi Arabia). Iraq could be the breeding ground of a new Islamic Republic, or at the very least, a new Hizbullah. Some observers, like Thomas Friedman, foreign columnist at the *New York Times*, caution against making too much of an Iranian bogeyman, pointing out that Iran had and will continue to have influence in Iraq, and that it is the Shi'i Iraqis whose status had been transformed.¹¹ In contrast, Iran's Islamic political system remains in place, and Iranians were not able to effect changes at the polls. Their reform movement is not extinct, but it cannot stand up to other forces in society or the power of the hardliners in government. Iranians, moreover, see few problems with their own policies in Iraq. Instead, their official government press blames attacks on the Shi'a on the misguided policies of the American government. As always, there is a more cooperative aspect to Iran's relations with Iraq, in that the country has been willing to negotiate certain border issues and to communicate informally with the American Embassy in Iraq.

Iran's Iraq policy gave way to concerns about Iranian brinkmanship on the issue of nuclear development. Tensions circled around the person and statements of the Iranian President. Was the new President Ahmadinejad a lightening rod for populist sentiment in Iran, a catalyst for anti-American and anti-Western grievances? How will these two very important situations play out and what sorts of risks and threats can we anticipate in the future?

IRAQ AND THE FUTURE

Iraq is America's most important project in a newly imagined and more democratic Middle East. To date, a transformation of the Middle East, despite all the difficulties encountered in "post-conflict" Iraq and Afghanistan, remains a plank of U.S. foreign policy. Paradoxically, that ambition places conservatives, including neoconservatives, on the same side of the room as those in the region who have long opposed authoritarianism or called for reforms, increased pluralism, or some counterweight to their ruling elites. These U.S. intentions for the region, if they are sincere, break with realism in our foreign policy which, in Kissingerian mode, maintained alliances with undemocratic rulers to promote stability and a balance of power in the area. The prevailing wisdom for decades was that the slow steady growth of stronger political institutions would produce increasingly mature political systems. These eventually should democratize, especially if free market economies were encouraged. That thesis of political development dominated from the 1960s well into the 1980s when the Middle East and the Muslim world entered an entirely new phase.

Today's neo-realist vision for the Middle East echoes some past efforts to transform the region. At the end of World War II, the British and French expected educated elites to promote "liberalism" or liberal thought in their societies. The British-sponsored Brothers of Freedom, organized by Freya Stark and others, held lectures and discussions with promising members of the effendi class (gentlemen bureaucrats) in Egypt and Iraq.¹² Instead of white collar liberalism, the Syrian, Egyptian, and Iraqi revolutions brought an end to elite-

based parliamentarianism and political pluralism, and altered the class basis of regime beneficiaries in those countries.¹³ Thereafter, Arab unity and Arab socialism were the chief concerns of U.S. and European interests in the region.

American foreign policy sought an alliance of non-Arab states with more conservative Arab states to balance the Arab socialism and anti-Israeli stances of Gamal `Abd al-Nasser, President of Egypt, and the Ba`th in Syria and Iraq. This produced a cold war in the region, periodically expressed in proxy conflicts as in Yemen. Virtually no one anticipated that political opposition, as well as social development, eventually would be expressed in Islamic terms in Arab states (with the possible exception of Saudi Arabia) rather than in Marxist/socialist discourse. It was therefore a great shock to many observers, even in Iraq, when an American ally, Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, was overthrown in an Islamic revolution, and country after country faced the activities of home-grown Islamist movements.

Today, what Sunni Iraqi Arabs fear is vengeance at the hands of some of their Shi`a compatriots due to their horrendous treatment under Saddam. And they protest their exclusion from power in the new Iraq. Their Arab supporters predict a Lebanonized Iraq, and exude paranoia about a new cold war by proxies that might pit Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, and possibly Iran against Arab states influenced by the *salafi* and revivalist movements. Since then, not only these Arabs, but others who shed no tears for Saddam Hussein are concerned about the American dream of a New Middle East, particularly as it has been iterated as part of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). They view American injunctions on Arab (or Muslim) reform as the latest

mode of imperialism, and warn that they open the door to regime insecurity for Iraq's neighbors. Other observers have drawn attention to the destabilizing features of intersectarian conflict in Iraq as well.¹⁴

Given these fears, we wonder if American redrawing of the Middle East with Iraq as its centerpiece may be too ambitious. Can Arab liberals be unified to take advantage of new circumstances, or have they been utterly marginalized?¹⁵ Are critics in the region correct when they assert that America really is not committed to democratization; that this is merely a domestic appeal to rationalize the sacrifices made in Iraq and controversial aspects of the GWOT?

The theme of transformational change in Iraq that would provide courage and support to other Arab and Muslim democrats, and incentives for ruling elites to reform is appealing. It is more attractive than alternative explanations for U.S. policy, for instance, those revolving around the need for oil security. According to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice,¹⁶ America could not simply leave the Middle East as it was, dominated by authoritarian figures like Saddam Hussein. Iraq was a destabilizing force in the region under his regime.

Secretary Rice also asserted that America would no longer do business with dictators; that authoritarianism must give way, an idea with great resonance in the region. Meanwhile, within Iraq, the essential structures of a confessional democracy, one based on ethnic or sectarian membership, are being erected. Secretary Rice has explained the difficulties and resistance to this project by suggesting that such major transformations are not easy; patience is called for.

One of these difficulties is intersectarian strife, specifically Sunni-Shi'i violence, whether in daytime

attacks or in the gruesome discovery of bodies. Many Arab and Muslim states opposed America's campaign in Iraq. Among their chief voiced concerns were the oft-stated uncontrollable nature of Iraqi society and the strength Iran wields in the regional balance of power, which they see as key factors in intersectarian conflict.

Iran's Islamic Republic presents an entirely different national model to Islamists throughout the region. It is both populist and committed to popular representation, though power ultimately rests with the Supreme Faqih (jurist), Ayatullah Khamene'i, who succeeded Ayatullah Khomeini, and a conservative Council of Guardians. In Iraq, now that Islamism is strongly rooted, one could only expect Iranian-influenced Iraqi Islamist parties like the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI, sometimes referred to as SAIRI) to promote movement toward the Iranian model. However, other Iraqi political actors, including the leading Shi'i cleric in the country, Ayatullah Sistani, do not favor the Iranian state model, nor does Sistani promote Ayatullah Khomeini's doctrine of *vilayet-e faqih* (rule of the jurist). The question is, then, whether the newly structured forms of democratic representation will irrevocably heighten the political aspects of Iraqi Shi'i Islamism? And if so, which ones, and how might they affect Iraq over time? Will the sectarian violence that has plagued the country since the bombing of the golden dome of the al-Askari mosque¹⁷ in Samarra on February 22, 2006, finally die down, only to erupt periodically? Can such tensions be lessened through federal and local measures, and contained with a fully operational military and police force?

Democratization elsewhere in the Arab Middle East has mired down. An eventful 2005 "democratic spring" led to a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon,

and the country now lies devastated by the 2006 Israeli offensive. Most Middle Eastern governments still are authoritarian, albeit slight movement toward pluralism in Egypt, governmental reforms in Morocco, a new public discourse on reform in Saudi Arabia, and then the electoral success of Hamas has occurred. Three-quarters of the Egyptian parliament voted to extend the long-protested Emergency Laws in that country which essentially allow a suspension of normal legal processes and repression of opposition. Arab states complain that the battle against terrorism in their countries is hampering civil society's efforts at reform, and that governments hastened to make some cosmetic changes to please the United States, but these are far from sufficient. Some Americans make much of the divergence between a Jeffersonian-style secularist democracy and the types of democracies and political parties that may prevail in the region. From inside the Middle East, would-be democracy advocates complain that it is a matter of business as usual between the United States and undemocratic allies, who provide lip service to reform, but not substantive changes. They are managing this because alternatives to their governance are likely to be Islamist in nature.

Iraq's fledgling elected government is dangerously weak. Many observers express concern about Iran's influence at a time pregnant with uncertainty about Iraq's cohesion. The formation of the first independent elected Iraqi government was contentious and lengthy. The draft constitution is to undergo reform, and the exact shape of federalism in Iraq is being debated. If federalism in the Iraqi context were to lead to a Shi'i provincial grouping, as SCIRI's leadership had proposed, like that of the Kurds, then the specter of a *de facto* Islamic Republic of Iraq might be more than fantasy.

SEPARATISM OR UNITY

Federalism in Iraq may lead to separatism. A Shi'i mini-state could be created in a completely legal manner. However, a Shi'i region, or state, might not be feasible for practical reasons. Either a three-province or a nine-province grouping would be highly controversial to certain elements in the Shi'a population, as well as Sunnis. The presence of oil facilities in these areas, and centers of mixed population are only part of the problem. Iraq needs a unified national vision, which the Ba'th party provided, if only through extremely repressive practices and elimination of its political competitors. Also, separatist schemes previously were proposed in southern Iraq and were defeated in the interest of a united Iraq. In the 1920s, Southern separatists tried to found a state in the Basra area. This idea was supported mainly by Sunni immigrants from Najd and wealthy date merchants. Shi'i men of Basra, far less influential than its supporters, defeated this scheme and waved the banners of Iraqi nationalism. Certain historians and those bemoaning the post-Saddam chaos in Iraq have called it an artificial state, or a British creation. It is intriguing to realize young Basrans and others in the Ottoman administration had defined an "Iraq" reaching from Basra to Samarra and, with that idea, defeated the separatists of their day.¹⁸

Iraqi unity and nationalism are of paramount importance to the success of the state. Still, under the current draft Iraqi constitution, the ambivalent language that supports a Kurdish entity, and independent legislation in it, provides the very same rationale to any other region, now defined as "one province or more."¹⁹ In Article 116, Section 2, the constitution states that the regional authority may amend implementation of

the federal law, and Article 111 says that priority will be given to the region's law in cases of dispute.²⁰ The legal vagueness that has and could permit significant Kurdish autonomy also would support particular regional rules in a "Shi'i region," at least where matters "do not pertain to the exclusive powers of the federal authorities," according to Article 111. One could envision the application of Ja`fari family law or Islamic criminal punishments in such a region as many Iraqis and others fear.

Oddly, the United States supported political leadership by the very party, SCIRI, that has made the case most strongly for a Shi'i region.²¹ And the Badr Corps, SCIRI's militia, is accused of having direct connections with Iranian Revolutionary Guards, Iranian intelligence, and training.²² Following the Iraqi elections and a period of debate over the designation of portfolios, Secretary Rice and her then British counterpart, Jack Straw, pressured Iraqis to form a national unity government, meeting in Iraq with al-Ja`fari, President Talabani, and others opposed to al-Ja`fari. The Iraqis still were attempting to work through the dispute over the nomination for prime minister, which was first claimed by Ibrahim al-Ja`fari of the United Iraqi Alliance. The United States preferred a SCIRI candidate, previous Vice President Adel Abdul Mehdi.²³ Secretary Rice said at that time, on the *Newshour with Jim Lehrer*, that the Prime Minister, "must be somebody who can unify the various blocs, the various groups of voters, who also went to the polls and now represent the interests of their voters."²⁴ Commenting on her statements on the same program, Professor Babak Rahimi of the University of California said, "I think it's giving the impression especially to the Shia Iraqis and just generally Iraqis at large, that

really the Americans are the ones calling the shots.”²⁵ There were other factors in this effort. Clearly a key concern was Shi’i-Sunni strife which had heightened since February 22, 2006, when an attack was launched on the golden Askari mosque of Samarra. A campaign to unseat al-Ja`fari circulated around intimations that he was ineffective and had difficulty managing his government.²⁶ According to journalist David Ignatius, Ambassador Khalilzad “viewed Jafari as too weak and sectarian,” and organized a rival coalition of Kurdish and Sunni politicians that outnumbered the Shi’ite alliance nominating al-Ja`fari.²⁷ The Kurds believed him to be stalling on the issue of Kirkuk, whose ethnic status is yet to be determined in a referendum, and the media reported that Sunni parties were irritated by al-Ja`fari’s failure to take a stand against alleged Shi’i death squad attacks on Sunnis.²⁸ American preferences toward the Shi’ite political party, SCIRI, appear to be based on Washington’s need for more malleable and effective leadership. But might not SCIRI leadership even more swiftly promote Iran’s growing influence in Iraq?

A slightly different explanation of the political jostling that did not focus on al-Ja`fari’s personal qualities goes like this. The al-Da`wa Party, more authentically Iraqi than SCIRI, was bolstered by the support of Muqtada al-Sadr, allowing al-Ja`fari to defeat narrowly SCIRI with the additional support of independents.²⁹ The United States sought to outbalance the Sadrist by defeating al-Ja`fari,³⁰ and also obtain more concessions to Sunnis and Kurds.³¹

In the end, Iraqis selected Jawad al-Maliki of the al-Da`wah Party as Prime Minister. A leading Sunni politician described al-Maliki as being “stronger, more insistent, and more practical” than al-Ja`fari, in

addition to being a good communicator.³² Nevertheless, intersectarian violence remained at an intolerable level by July. Insurgent attacks continued as well.

SCIRI and its militias are just one worry. The Jaysh al-Mahdi, the militia forces of Muqtada al-Sadr, are culpable in the violence, and their pursuit of “Wahhabis” and other Sunnis is a definite concern that should be addressed through punitive measures by Muqtada himself. He has been a source of overblown accusations concerning Iran’s undue influence in Iraq as well. More importantly, he and his forces may play a role in future Shi’a in-fighting. Muqtada is a populist figure who has attracted those elements who want a *qa’id* (leader) rather than a spiritual guide, and an activist less-Iranian-influenced figure. His authority within Shi’ism is very limited, accruing from his family connections to Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr, and his father, Muhammad Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr. The leader of his father’s devotees is Ayatullah Kadhim al-Ha’iri, who is in Iran and has now separated himself from Muqtada, at least in part, because he cannot control him.³³

Intersectarian violence is an immediate concern, a grave obstacle to Iraq’s future. A slow-moving, possibly unavoidable Iranian influence is not as tangible. But it is possible that there is no solution to the former issue without addressing the latter. A high degree of anxiety about Iran’s strength in Iraq and the region is a more general and widespread phenomenon.

Is it better for Iraqis to accede to American ideas regarding their new democracy, specifically that concessions and promises made to Sunni Iraqis could reduce the friction between the two groups and that they need to be institutionalized in certain ways? Are Americans conceptualizing Iraqi-Iranian relations in

light of intergroup tensions, or more along the lines of interstate influences that have emerged with regularity in Europe? U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad suggested a new approach:

It's not the U.S. policy to advocate or promote a hostile relationship between Iraq and Iran. They are neighbors. We want to see these two countries have good relations with each other. But good relations also mean . . . that there is no interference in Iraqi affairs. Good relations with regard to all the neighbors means not to seek to dominate, particularly Iraqi institutions or Iraqi areas, and to work together to have an Iraq . . . that can stand on its own feet, is at peace internally and as well as . . . with the neighbors, to be a model.

There is a need for a change in the way one thinks about regional relations in this part of the world. And that is not to look at things in a zero sum way, in an old geopolitical . . . way, that in the weakness of one's neighbor to see advantages for oneself. That's what Europe did for centuries . . . in post-World War II, there was a change in . . . that, in fact, if your neighbor is poor, if your neighbor is in distress, it can only send problems for you. You can't sell goods to a neighbor that has that kind of problems. And Europeans learned through a huge number of wars.

. . . the time has come for the countries of this region as well to take another look, not to seek grandeur in the misery . . . or in the fragmentation of the neighbor or to use elements of neighboring powers' state against the interest of that country. And I think this is the message that I'd like to send on the relations between Iraq and its neighbors.³⁴

It is true that during the horrible and lengthy civil war in Lebanon, many countries in the region supported particular clients in that conflict. That may be why the 144 militias and fighting forces were able to continue

fighting for so many years. On the other hand, the participation of other regional powers effected truces and eventually the 1991 Ta'if Accords that ended the violence.

This leads us to the strong expressions of concern about Iraq voiced in the region: that it is now the plaything of Iran, that Iranian agents are hard at work organizing the new Iraq, and that the United States apparently is blind to these trends, or worse, it is encouraging them in order to create a bloc of new entities that will battle Sunni salafism and simultaneously promote U.S. interests. Further, the Iran-Syria-Hizbullah axis is a matter of concern, not only to observers who support America's New Middle East, but also to Arab observers, especially in the absence of other effective regional alliances.³⁵

As with most fears or anxieties, a kernel of truth supports its exaggeration. If Iraq, under a new, more just system of representation, has emancipated Shi'i Iraqis, then with their newfound majority and Islamist discourse, they might well choose to emulate aspects of the Shi'i state next door. Islamic law, moral guidelines, and gender restrictions already are being drawn on, albeit crudely, in areas of the country. If we add to this germ of truth the fact that Iran is a fairly strong and populous state with a huge clerical establishment and Shi'i legitimacy whereas Iraq is still weak and threatened by a high level of insurgent violence, it is more difficult to refute the pundits' claim.

No Regional Shi'a Threat.

Could the Shi'a unite? Would they support U.S. policy objectives? Democratization? A necessary corrective here is that observers should not think of

the Shi`a as a monolith, either religiously or politically, in the past or present. Throughout the Islamic world, the Shi`a do not maintain common interests beyond certain key aspects of theology, historical experience, and legal tradition. Subsects and offshoots of Shi`a Islam developed over time. These major groupings are: 1) the Ithna `Ashariyya (Twelver) Muslims who belong to the Ja`afari legal school; 2) the Zaydiyya (of Yemen) who have their own legal school, and 3) the Isma`iliyya. Offshoots of Ismaili Islam include the Druze (Muwahhidun) and the `Alawi sect. The Ithna `Ashariyya tend to regard members of the offshoot sects as heretics, much as contemporary Sunnis, impacted by the Wahhabi rejection of Shi`ism, think of the Ithna `Ashariyya.

In the brief explanations of Shi`ism available to the general public, its diversity is underemphasized. A few aspects of theology and praxis usually are covered. These are the institution of the Imamate, the celebration of `Ashura (where permitted; it is not allowed in mixed towns in Saudi Arabia, nor was it in Saddam's Iraq) in a flagellant procession, and passion plays based on the history of the Shi`i cause. Sunni and Shi`i Muslims alike believe in the doctrine of *shafa`* or intercession on behalf of the believers, but in Shi`ism, members of the *ahl al-bayt* (Muhammad's family) and certain Imams may provide it; for instance, Sayyidna Fatima (the Prophet Muhammad's daughter) may intercede on behalf of one who is a *muhibb* (a lover of God), even if he is a sinner. A theme of redemptive suffering, collective in nature, is ingrained deeply in Shi`i rituals, lamentation poetry (*marathi*), and visiting of holy sites.³⁶ The concepts of *ghayba* (occultation, the state of the Twelfth Imam, the Imam Mahdi) and the *intizar* (the period of waiting for the return of the Imam),

and other beliefs concerning the Twelfth Imam's return are key to Ithna `Ashari (Twelver) Shiism.

Other differences between Sunnism and Shi'ism pertain to Islamic law, specifically Shi'ism's use of and basis for *ijtihad* (a juridical principle that literally means self-exertion to attain a conclusion), which was excluded by the Sunni schools of law as a source of jurisprudence. The two groups also regard *ijma`*, consensus, another legal principle somewhat differently, with the Shi'a clerics following the *ijma`* of the Imams and criticizing the Sunni use of *qiyas*, or analogy in deductive form (*mustanbit al-`illa*) in jurisprudence.³⁷

Shi'ism subdivided because of differing opinions on the chain of religious leadership, specifically the designation of the Imam within the institution of the Imamate. Put very simply, the idea of the Imamate is a religious authority recognized by the Party of `Ali (the Shi'a) after the Prophet's death, personified in an Imam. This Shi'i Imam must be distinguished from an ordinary prayer leader in Sunni Islam, also known as an *imam*, who may or may not have any advanced religious training. The Shi'i Imam is Allah's servant, infallible, and conversant with all Quranic interpretations.³⁸ Each Imam should designate his successor, however, the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, died in 765 without doing so. The ensuing differences of opinion produced at least six subsects, including the Isma'ili Shi'is who trace the line of Isma'il to their leader, the Agha Khan, the 49th Imam. Their esoteric teachings were spread by missionaries and the powerful navy of the Fatimid empire, but are today rejected by Sunnis and Twelver Muslims in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon. The larger Twelver grouping in these countries recognized Musa as the seventh Imam, and acknowledge a line of 12 Imams, the last of which is in occultation (neither dead nor alive

until his return to earth). The caliphs, concerned by the potential popularity of Imams, kept them thereafter under house arrest,³⁹ establishing another theme of Shi'ism, the tension between temporal and religious authority.

The Zaydi Shi'a of contemporary Yemen, and 10th century Tabaristan, followed Zayd bin `Ali as their Imam, who rebelled against the Ummayyad ruler, Hisham, in 740. The Zaydis do not believe in the infallibility of the Imams, nor in the doctrine of the hidden (occulted) Imam.

Other inter-Shi'i rifts emerge from the competition between different centers of religious scholarship. For instance, Hillah in Iraq was an important center of Shi'i activity, but was eclipsed in modern times by Najaf and Qum in Iran. Today, some speculate that Najaf might eclipse Qum,⁴⁰ since the former possesses an undisputed *marja`* (*Marja` al-taqlid al-mutlaq* means the ultimate source of emulation, meaning the most distinguished cleric). Other clerics and Shi'i Muslims could follow his rulings and intellectual approach, namely Sistani. Whereas in Iran, the office of *marja`* has been supplanted to some extent by the political office of the Supreme Faqih (jurist), currently Ayatullah Khamene'i. This dispute, which will be explained more thoroughly below, relates to the various acceptance or rejection of doctrine of rule by the jurist, *vilayat-e faqih*, and the future of political Islam in Iraq and Iran.

Further differences within Twelver Shi'ism that have affected Iraqis and Iranians stem from doctrinal disputes between *usuli* (rationalist) and *akhbari* (traditionalist) Shi'a. *Usuli* Shi'ism was the version originally spreading from Hilla, Iraq, the center of Shi'i learning to Iran and Lebanon. *Akhbari* Shi'ism, which contested the emulation of the Shi'i *mujtahids* (religious

authorities who can utilize the legal principle of *ijtihād*), temporarily revived. Then, a neo-*usulism*, or an *usuli* revival, overcame *akhbarism* to a great extent, which survives today in Bahrain and in the city of Basra.⁴¹ The two were antagonistic to the extent that *akhbaris* would avoid “touching an *usuli* text without using a handkerchief.”⁴² The *usuli* tradition supports the role of intellectual clerics who possesses *ʿaql* (intellectualism) and can exercise *ijtihād*.

Ijtihād is a method of jurisprudence solely employed by certified Shiʿi jurists after the 10th century, when the “door to *ijtihād*” was closed in Sunni Islam, and Sunni clerics instead emphasized *ijmaʿ*, or consensus of the jurists (or the community of Medina) and the traditions of the Sunni legal schools. They utilize *ijmaʿ* as a source of law, along with the Qurʾan, hadith (“traditions” or short texts about the Prophet’s deeds, words, or preferences or those of his Companions), and *qiyas* (analogy). This is why Shiʿi jurists may attain the rank of *mujtahid* (one who can make *ijtihād*) in contrast with Sunni clerics who cannot claim this title. Modern-day Sunni reformers have called for *ijtihād*’s reinstatement in Sunni jurisprudence. On this point and others, Shiʿism and Sunnism may not be irreconcilable; there are elements in each sect aiming at a more peaceful, equitable, less tradition-bound manner of realizing Islamic law, society, and possibly government.

Also important is that *marjaʿism*, (*marjaʿiyya*) the reverence and emulation of a particular living Shiʿi religious scholar, was upheld in *usulism*, thus leading to the designation of an ultimate authority, *marjaʿ al-taqlid al-mutlaq*. The emergence of this position lent more power to the elite Shiʿi *ʿulama*.⁴³ There has not always been a *marjaʿ* at this level, nor would he necessarily be the authority for both Iran and Iraq.

Individuals may follow their own *marja`*. In addition, *usulism* is attributed with injecting more activism into the sect, but that may be as much an outcome of other 20th century intellectual trends, like Marxist-Islamism, as in the views of the highly influential Iranian writer, `Ali Shariati.⁴⁴

The concentration of Shi`a in Iran and the historical conjunction of Shi'ism and Iranian nationalism make the Islamic Republic and its clerical rule unique. Yet, Sistani could reject the official philosophy of Islamic governance held by Ayatullah Khamene'i and earlier iterated by Ayatullah Khomeini in *Islamic Government*, and that is a powerful statement about the decentralization and independence of Shi'i leadership.

The Shi`a of Iraq and the Iranian population further diverge ethnically, linguistically, and historically. It may not be practical to consider the two groups as religious, rather than political actors. Historian of Iran Nikki Keddie complained that the Shi`a were believed to "behave in ways that express their religiosity" everywhere, a myth that stemmed from the Iranian Revolution. At the time, she suggested that the "Shi'is worldwide have been more inclined to favor secularist governments and policies and to join secularist parties than have Sunnis."⁴⁵ The major reason for this is that outside of Iran, they have either been minorities (as in pre-civil war Lebanon, or Saudi Arabia) or a disenfranchised majority (as in Iraq). This was so in Iraq due to their exclusion from upper military ranks in the Ottoman army, their derivation from impoverished rural areas, and because of the threat that organized Shi'ism posed to Ba`thist Iraq.⁴⁶ In Bahrain, the Shi`a were alienated, underemployed, and their exclusion from the army and police underlined

regime fears of their loyalty.⁴⁷ In light of the region-wide growth of Islamism since the 1970s, it does not seem likely that Iraqi Shi'is would support secularism as avidly today. Still, one should be very careful about assumptions that an Iranian-style Islamic Republic of Iraq will obtain strong popular support everywhere. Further, American foreign policy has provided a new opportunity for Iraqi Shi'a. In contrast, the United States has regarded the Shi'a of Lebanon in a very different way. Although they also were and remain an underrepresented majority, the U.S. Government regards Hizbullah, the most popular Shi'a political party in Lebanon, as a terrorist organization. Support by the Syrians for Hizbullah and pressure on Syria to withdraw from Lebanon further complicate this picture.

American interests concerning the Shi'i minority in Saudi Arabia appear to waver between the goal of maintaining tighter security over the oil-rich Eastern province, and promoting more religious tolerance in the Saudi system. As Syria is also a part of the imagined Shi'a crescent, one notes an additional foreign policy dilemma there. It is a stretch to characterize Syria as a religious state of any type; indeed, the Ba'thi ideology downplays religious allegiances. Still, despite Hafez al-Asad's crushing of Sunni Islamism in 1982, the Muslim Brotherhood has revived. And should Bashar al-Asad's government ever falter, the Sunni majority in Syria's major cities might well support a political dominance of moderate Islamists like the Brotherhood.

We might extend the discussion to the Shi'i populations in Pakistan and India. Militant attacks have targeted the Shi'a of Pakistan on far too many occasions, but the sect's relationship with the state and its legal system differs from their counterparts in Saudi Arabia, since they have obtained a certain right

to follow the Ja`fari *madhhab*, the Shi`a school of law in Pakistan.

It should be mentioned that where Shi'ism has served as a force for centralization and community support, it has been effective. That may be a function of the Shi`a clergy's more independent economic basis and more clearly defined hierarchy. Preachers in the mosques loyal to Sistani's network in Iraq, and in the Sadrist networks, have demonstrated their skills in community organization in Iraq,⁴⁸ and Sistani himself used his stature to calm his community and restrain vengeance. In the Muslim diaspora, it has been difficult for Shi`a Muslims to unite; they have tended to meet only in their linguistic-national groupings, but more recently some endeavors, like the Young Muslim Association, support community activities and provide a counterpoint to anti-Shi`a or anti-Muslim bias. Perhaps these examples, added to the history of organized clerical education and its dissemination in Shi'ism, can support the argument of Vali Nasr⁴⁹ that Shi'ism could serve as an antidote to violent salafism. The only problem is that Shi'ism also has produced violence of a revolutionary and now state-Stalinist type emanating from Iran. Therefore, for this and other reasons, it would be better for American policymakers to avoid the modern-day "divide-and-conquer" formula if that means utilizing Shi'ism against Sunni salafism. Rather, the two sects need to seek reconciliation, especially in efforts in the GWOT, and in the Muslim world's responses to Western attacks on Muslim propensities.

IRAN AND IRAQ

Iran and Iraq have a very specific history of mutual and conflicting interests. We can examine these along with American-Iranian and American-Iraqi relations

at the global, regional, and national levels. For much of Saddam Hussein's reign, competitive symbiosis would best describe this relationship. Contemporary Iranian-Iraqi relations are both complex and symbiotic.⁵⁰

Ethnic tensions between Iranians and Arabs have played a role in regional politics since the initial Arab conquest of Iran. Other ethnicities are represented in Sunni-Shi'i tensions elsewhere; for instance, the Taliban made use of Pushtun Sunni hatred for the Shi'i Hazara in Afghanistan. The Hazara were treated as heretics religiously and socially, something akin to inherited slaves in mixed communities,⁵¹ and their ethnic distinctiveness played a role in this process. Bahraini Shi'a are often of Iranian origin, but a more limited number of Iraqi Shi'a are ethnically Persian, including many of the clerical families. The Shi'a of Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon are, on the other hand, Arabs. Shi'ism itself was originally both an Arabian peninsular and a Mesopotamian movement. The Indian and Pakistani Shi'i communities, and East African Indian offshoots, are neither Arab nor Iranian.

The Shi'a, like Sunni Muslims, emphasize the commonality of all believers, regardless of race or national origin, based on the Prophet's *hadith*, or tradition, "I have been sent to the Red and Black."⁵² Yet a historical and modern problem has been the Arabs' assertion that they best understand religious traditions because the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic. In some areas of the Muslim world such as Indonesia, a reverence for Arab customs or authenticity is posed against local and more syncretic practices and beliefs. This tension, which manifests itself in a modern debate about which Islamic practices are actually Arab cultural patterns, exists in Shi'ism as well as Sunnism. Likewise, clerical leadership in Shi'ism is Indian,

Turkic, Iranian, and Arab. Nevertheless, in Iraq, there is some significance to the fact that Arabs were among the leading clerics of Najaf. Muqtada al-Sadr and his followers emphasize his Arab identity to provide a contrast to the sometimes quietist and intellectually elite Shi'i clerics of the Hawza in Najaf, who are not Arabs (for instance, Ayatullah Sistani).

Sunni hatred of the Shi'a became more or less virulent at certain historical junctures. For example, though the Fatimids were Isma'ili Shi'i rulers over Egyptian Sunnis, anti-Shi'i discourse did not develop there particularly until the emergence of contemporary jihadism and anti-Iranian discourse by the state. (Egypt actually outlawed Shi'ism in the 1990s.) However, much of the justification for modern-day salafi antipathy to the Shi'a was provided by Ibn Taymiyya, in the 14th century.⁵³ Later, during the long wars of the Ottomans against the Safavid Empire along what is now roughly the Iraqi-Iranian border, flight and killing on the basis of sect took place on a large scale. When Sunni Afghan tribes conquered Persia, hundreds of Shi'i scholars and merchants left for the shrine cities of Iraq.⁵⁴

In 18th century Arabia, Muhammad `Abd al-Wahhab led a movement against what he viewed as corrupt innovative practices, including Shi'ism and popular reverence for the tombs of holy persons. The Wahhabis sacked Karbala in eastern Iraq in 1801 where the tomb of Husayn, grandson of the Prophet and leader of the Shi'i rebellion against the Umayyads, is located. The Wahhabi movement regarded the Shi'a as heretics, and, though they number up to 45 percent of the population of Saudi Arabia's Eastern province, they could not build mosques or observe or march at Shi'i holidays. The government forbade the call to prayer, the *adhan*, in the Shi'a manner, and they were

discriminated against in terms of their access to jobs, education, and participation in government. Prior to public demonstrations in Hasa in 1979 and 1980, the Shi'i towns lacked paved roads, schools, and medical facilities. There was no education about the Shi'a themselves in the national system; their authors, history, and beliefs were not taught; and Shi'i women, unlike other Saudi women, were not allowed to teach.⁵⁵ Paradoxically, the government used to arrange for religious students' clerical study in Iraq, but the intent seems to have been to supply the community with its own source of religious guidance. Because of all of this, Shi'i invective toward Sunni militance coming from Iran, Lebanon, or Saudi Arabia tends to identify Wahhabism, rather than Qutbism – the brand of militant Islam inspired by Sayyid Qutb, martyred Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Sunni antipathy to the Shi'a conflict is constructed primarily on the basis of doctrinal and historical disagreements. The animosity between Iraqi sects is, then, a local version of a much broader dislike or hatred. Muslims have made some efforts to bridge this gap, for instance, in the efforts of the Kubrawiyya Sufi order, especially under its leader, Muhammad Nurbaksh (d. 869/1464), and when Nadir Shah (d. 1747), ruler of the Afsharid state, tried to prohibit Shi'i cursing and repudiation of the first Three Caliphs and to have Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq's legal teachings recognized as a fifth school of Islamic law on a par with the four Sunni schools. However, Iranian *`ulama* at the time were opposed to Shi'ism's reduction to the status of a legal school.⁵⁶ Nineteenth century Islamic reformer Jamal al-Din al-Afghani called for the Sunnis and Shi'a to unite against Western imperialism. And the effort to recognize the Twelver or Ja'afari Shi'i *madhhab* (school)

of Islam as a legitimate legal school continued when Shaykh Mahmud al-Shaltut, the rector of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, the foremost center of instruction in Sunni Islam, gave a fatwa to permit the instruction of that Shi'i *madhhab* at the university in 1959.⁵⁷ In Iraq, a Sunni, Shaykh Abd al-Aziz al-Badri, leader of the Hizb al-Tahrir, bravely preached against the Ba`thi regime's arrest, torture, and public accusations against Sayyid Mahdi, the son of Ayatullah Hakim. He was then arrested and killed in prison, his tortured body dumped at his doorstep—one of the first martyrs of the al-Bakr-Hussayn regime.⁵⁸

Sunni objections to the Shi'a stem from the latter's support of `Ali ibn Abi Talib as Caliph, and in his status as Imam in the Shi'i institution of the *a'imah*, the ultimately legitimate Muslim rulers. Therefore, Sunnis protest the Shi'i phrase *Ashhadu anna `Aliyan wali Allah*" (I testify that `Ali is the designated agent of Allah), which the Shi'a add to the customary testimony of faith (*shahada*). Similarly, the Shi'a cite Quranic verses that they say were deleted from the standard Qur'an which mention `Ali's right to succeed as Caliph. As was explained above, Shi'a believe that the *a'imah*, or chain of Imams, are infallible and can intercede on behalf of the believer. Sunnis object to all of these ideas, as well as the Shi'i deemphasis on the Companions of the Prophet and the practice of reviling the first three Caliphs. They consider the Shi'i practices of temporary marriage (*mut`ah* in Arabic, *sigheh* in Farsi) and dissimulation called *taqiya* (not revealing that one is a Shi'a) illegal.⁵⁹ Often Sunnis, unfamiliar with Shi'i doctrine, accuse the Shi'a of worshipping `Ali, rather than God, or of not recognizing the Prophet Muhammad at all, which is decidedly not the case in Shi'ism.

In addition, the ethno-historical distaste of Persians for Arabs, the bitterness generated by the Iran-Iraq war, unwillingness of Iraqi Shi'i organizations to assume subservience to Tehran (with the exception of SCIRI) are all factors that discourage alliances between the two groups. Anti-Arab feeling stemming from the destruction of the Sassanian empire by the Muslim army is not paralleled in other conquered regions—North Africa for example. When the *mawali*, clients of the Muslims, were disadvantaged as compared to earlier converts' privileges (for example, in their sharing of the conquest booty), territorial and ethno-historical loyalties created frictions in the Umayyad and Abbasid eras. East of the Tigris river, the population failed to adopt Arabic as a popular language, in contrast with the territories of the former Roman empire to the West and Egypt. Instead, the old language, Pahlavi, gave way to a Muslim Persian (written in Arabic script) which enjoyed a literary revival from 1111 to 1274.⁶⁰ The elite elevation of Persian as a language and culture continued into the Ottoman period. An entire century of that Ottoman era featured a war between the Safavids of Iran and the Ottomans. This period, more than any other, defined Iran's national identity with Shi'ism and established the Iraqi-Iranian borders, more or less up to the present. Saddam Hussayn used a specific term for that earlier Persian literary revival to demarcate Shi'i Iraqis whom he said were disloyal to their country, *shu`ubi*.⁶¹ The word implied one who rejected Arab identity. Saddam was not the first contemporary Iraqi leader to use this invective against the Shi'a; it had been a favorite epithet of Sati` al-Husri, Director of Education in Faysal's Iraq, and a proponent of Arab unity.⁶²

Iranian anti-Arab sentiment strengthened during the bitter 8-year Iran-Iraq war, particularly after the

Iraqis employed chemical weapons against their enemies. Iranians recruited students as young as age 9 for the war by justifying it as a jihad,⁶³ a battle by the faithful against the Godless Saddam. The resentments of that war are strongest on a personal level, due to the high death and injury figures. On the other hand, Shi'i pilgrimage and corpse traffic ensured that Iraqis continued to encounter Iranians, and when the Shi'a were exiled from Iraq in the 1990s, as well as the late 1970s, many found a refuge in Iran.

Beyond pilgrim traffic, which also distinguishes the holy cities of Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia, Mashhad in Iran, with the tomb of Imam Reza, and at a smaller scale, Damascus (for the Shi'a), the Wadi al-Salam grave area in Najaf is either the largest or second largest in the world. The corpse traffic has markedly defined Shi'i interstate relations for centuries. Its political economy with some 100 funerals a day, motivates much of local politics. All of this, along with the demise of Saddam Hussein, points to the resurgence of Najaf al-Ashraf (Najaf the Noble) as the center of Shi'ism.

With so many Iranians traveling to Iraq, the Iranian government carefully monitors their movements. A grave security risk to Iran is posed by their disappearance, recruitment while on pilgrimage, or misdeed. The pilgrim and corpse traffic, the growth of Islamist Shi'a political parties in Iraq, and the intersectarian conflict there all play a role in the various stories of Iran's influence in Iraq.

Neighboring countries have accused the United States of emphasizing sectarianism, and hence intersectarian tensions. Saddam treated sectarianism as a political sin, but at the same time engaged in sectarianism in his attacks against the Shi'a and the

Kurds. Whether because of the theme of Ba`thi Arab unity, or due to the overwhelming unfamiliarity of Sunnis with Shi'ism in other parts of the Muslim world, the prevailing wisdom in Iraq and outside of it is that sectarianism simply did not exist before 2003. This is disingenuous. It is true, however that neither Sunnis nor Shi'a tended to identify themselves as such before the fall of the Baathist regime; in fact, it was considered quite rude, or shameful to ask what sect one was,⁶⁴ but communitarian membership certainly mattered.

Al-Qa'ida's brand of virulent anti-Shi'ism unfortunately has had a great impact, both on the Sunni population in Iraq and more broadly on Muslims throughout the Islamic world, including those sympathetic to salafism. Anti-Shi'i rhetoric, together with the theme that the Iraqi Shi'a were American allies, sharpened contemporary anti-Shi'ism.⁶⁵

The salafi Islamists identified the Shi'a as *rafidhin*, or renegades or apostate *rafidhin*, since they allied with Westerners in Iraq. The late Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi called Ayatullah Sistani, "the leader of infidelity and heresy," and the Shi'a in general, "the crafty evil scorpion, the enemy lying in wait with a poisonous bite," who are intent on exacting revenge on the Sunnis, who had superiority over them in the Ba`thist regime.⁶⁶ He, too, alluded to their desire for a Shi'a super-state extending from Lebanon to Iran, enlisting their alleged acts of treachery, including their "cursing of Sunnis." To bolster his opinions, he quoted from the plentiful anti-Shi'a comments of Imam Malik Bukhari, Ibn Hazm, and Ibn Taymiyya, important medieval Islamic figures.⁶⁷ Zarqawi saw targeting the Shi'a as an essential strategy in "awakening" the Sunnis, as he defined four enemies in a letter to bin Ladin: 1) the Americans; 2) the Kurds; 3) [Iraqi] soldiers, police, and agents; and, 4) the Shi'a:

Those in our opinion are the key to change. I mean that targeting and hitting them in [their] religious, political and military depth will provoke them to show the Sunnis the hidden rancor working in their breasts. If we succeed in dragging them into the arena of sectarian war, it will become possible to awaken the inattentive Sunnis as they feel imminent danger.⁶⁸

Sunni fears of the Shi`a were awakened; political entities like the Iraqi Islamic Party, as well as ordinary citizens, have received numerous threats.⁶⁹ American and Iraqi troops discovered bodies of Iraqi Sunnis in facilities where militias had operated, perhaps with the knowledge of the Ministry of the Interior. These semi-official killings compounded daily gory discoveries in streets, neighborhoods, and roads, which unfortunately did not abate with the death of al-Zarqawi, at least to the time of this writing. The Shi`a also have suffered tremendously from bombings, massacres, kidnappings, and assassinations, with the greatest losses of life in the attacks on mosques, buses, and military and police recruitment stations.

In Iraq, an immediate result is cantonization. In mixed communities, Shi`a and Sunnis are being targeted, resulting in flight, broken families, and relocation. It is now estimated that more than 500,000 people have left their homes for these reasons. Further, Iraqis actually are changing their names so as not to be as easily identified by either personal or family names.⁷⁰

Iraqis can differentiate between Shi`i Iraqis and Iranians. Some Shi`a, for example, clerical families, are Iranian in origin. Others were classified as such in the earliest censuses of modern Iraq. Apparently, at that time, a great many Arab Shi`a stated their origin as being "Iranian" rather than "Ottoman," the only two choices proffered, in order to avoid military service.

Of these, nearly 200,000 Iraqis were exiled in the late 1970s. Earlier, Fayli Kurds, who are Shi`a, were exiled from 1971-72.⁷¹

In addition to the problem of sectarianism, some evidence suggests that Iraqis are more xenophobic than other nationalities. This xenophobia was measured in relation to particular nationalities, rather than religious sects. A survey in 2004 of 2,325 adults was compared to data from the useful World Values Survey from other countries. Ronald Inglehart, Mark Tessler, and Mansoor Moaddel found that more than 80 percent of the Iraqi public rejected foreigners as neighbors—more than twice the level of rejection found in any other society. This can be broken down by nationality, with 61 percent of the Iraqis studied rejecting Turks as neighbors, 55 percent not wanting Iranians as neighbors, and 44 percent rejecting Jordanians as neighbors.⁷²

SHI'ISM'S LEGACY IN IRAQ

The Shi`a legacy in Iraq is that of a people who were thoroughly suppressed, deprived, and discriminated against on the basis of their religious identity. Yet, the story is more complicated than the simple facts of discrimination, under-representation, and the state's confiscation of Shi'i property or endowments. The Shi`a had consisted of diverse groups: clerics; an urban lay class, including armed guilds, merchants, landowners, tribes-people, peasants; and somewhat later, a middle class. Their elites in the period up to 1958 were disempowered after the revolution through land reform and other policies. Besides the Shi'i social legacy, Arab nationalism and secularist policies negatively impacted the Shi`a and their clerics,⁷³ although many among the Shi`a did support Ba'thism

and other secular ideologies. Arab nationalism initially was not as popular in Iraq as in Syria, but the Iraqi officer corps, entirely Sunni, welcomed such ideas and opposed "Iraqism."⁷⁴ The chief official means for targeting the Shi`a was by way of calling them a sect, *ta'ifa*, that was responsible for divisive sectarianism (*ta'ifiyya*), particularly in the service of imperialism.⁷⁵ To understand the gravity of this charge, one must keep in mind the way that imperialism was identified in the Arab world. British and French imperialism, for instance, famously promoted minorities at the expense of the unity of the conquered population, whether the Druze and Alawis in Syria, the Maronites in Lebanon, the Berbers in North Africa, the Copts in Egypt, or the Assyrians in Iraq.⁷⁶ "Divide and conquer" policies weakened the fabric of the Arab world, according to this way of thought, allowing for Zionist victories in Palestine and weakening local governments.

While Saddam Hussein was well aware of and manipulated growing Islamist sentiments in the Sunni community, the Shi`i Islamist movement, which developed decades earlier, was repressed at different stages. The *`ulama* first organized the Shi`i Islamic movement to deflect the inroads made on piety by communism, Ba`thi secularism, and Arab nationalism.⁷⁷ They established study circles, published books and periodicals, and opposed certain government policies such as land reform. The al-Da`wah Party, which dates from this period, contacted their Sunni counterpart, the Muslim Brotherhood, for support of an Islamic state, and together they obtained a license for the Islamic Party in 1960. The Islamic Action Organization, formed in the mid-1970s, was the second response to Ba`thist suppression, and it coalesced around attacks on Hassan Shirazi, his brother, Muhammad Hussain

Shirazi, and their nephews, Muhammad Taqi al-Mudarisi and Hadi al-Mudarisi. This particular group was from Karbala, certainly Hassan Shirazi was more politically active than the al-Da`wa leaders, and to some degree, rivaled them.⁷⁸

Repression heightened when the Shi`i Islamic movement became increasingly militant after the Iranian revolution had shocked the Ba`thi regime. The Islamist movement acquired its own martyrs, for instance, Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr; Shahid al-Rabi` (the Fourth Martyr) or `Alima Amina al-Sadr; and his sister, also known as Bint al-Huda, who was hanged to death with her brother on April 8, 1980. Because of the violent suppression of this movement, and its longevity and renaissance under a new government, the Islamist revival that has swept the entire region has impacted the largest segments of the Shi`a community and characterizes the more successful Shi`i political parties.

In the aftermath of the Iranian revolution and the crushing of the Iraqi Islamists, the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution (SCIRI) was first established, and its Iranian patronage aimed at the demise of the Ba`thi system. The highly structured administrative body of SCIRI has been effective particularly in the early organizational period of the new Iraqi government. SCIRI, and its competitors, Muqtada al-Sadr's followers, and the Fadhila Party are all political actors who contrast with the *hawza*, the religious establishment in Najaf where there is an expectation that the clerics will remain outside of politics. In post-invasion Iraq, that ideal has not always been possible, even for Ayatullah Sistani, who urged his followers and community to cooperate with Americans. That is why jihadi salafists like al-Zarqawi labeled Sistani

the arch-*rafidhi* (renegade) apostate. The traditional clerical institution sees the future of Shi'ism more in terms of moral and educational, rather than political influence. On the other hand, Sistani insisted on a speedier transfer to an Iraqi authority than some might have preferred. And, to maintain his legitimacy, Sistani does not meet with Americans (nor non-Muslims). To suggest that his and the *hawza's* role was returning to its normal state and was separate from Iraq's political parties, Sistani announced that he would not support any particular political party in the 2005 elections.

Iraq provides a very great contrast with Iran on the issue of politics. Its recent experience with American state-building distinguishes it from its neighbor in a different way.

SHI'ISM'S POLITICAL LEGACY IN IRAN

The United States had a lengthy relationship with Iran that was curtailed following the Islamic Revolution and the hostage crisis in 1979. U.S. desired outcomes for Iran ran counter to Shi'ism's political legacy and the clerical system's struggle to continue its influence in the country. Most experts could not see any collision, as they believed that religion was a waning influence in modern society.

Iran⁷⁹ was first centralized and unified under the Safavid rulers, the first of whom, Shah Isma'il (1487-1524) was also a Sufi master and poet. Declaring Shi'ism their official sect and forcibly converting Sunnis,⁸⁰ the Safavids provided a transition to a modern consciousness of Iran as a Shi'i nation. The Safavids battled with the armies of the Ottoman Empire in Iraq, deepening Sunni-Shi'ite tensions and roughly establishing today's borders between the two countries.

Some centuries later, Iranian intellectuals reached out in two directions to modernize their ideas and society to Western Europe and Russia. They were unhappy with their rulers' claims to be the Shadow of God on Earth and strove to break their absolute political authority. They also struggled or colluded with the political ambitions of the British and the Russians and other Europeans who saw the potential for great profits in Iran. The language of this struggle was both Islamic and modernist. As their leaders sold off economic concessions, Persians warmed to antiauthoritarian and antiimperialist ideas like those of the Islamic reformer, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani,⁸¹ whose servant assassinated the Qajar Shah in 1898. Al-Afghani had sparked an anticapitalist and proto-democratic Islamic movement in 1891 called the Tobacco Rebellion,⁸² under which some Shi'i leaders stood for antiimperialism. In 1906, Iranians organized themselves in political societies and militated for a constitution. Their constitutional effort failed in 1911, and soon thereafter World War I embroiled the Middle East. By the end of the war, a new Middle East took shape. The Ottoman Empire that had governed Iraq ended, and the British assumed the mandate for that country. Britain and Russia, the chess players of the Great Game, continued their rivalry in Iran. A Cossack commander, Reza Khan, stepped into the power vacuum, occupying Tehran with his brigade in 1921, and then evacuating Russian troops. He became prime minister in 1923, and abolished the Qajar dynasty, in 1925, inventing a new royal lineage for himself with the family name Pahlavi, and crowned himself Shah.

Reza Shah and his son, Muhammad Reza Shah, attempted to centralize and modernize Iran, repressing in turn clerics, leftists, and nationalists, along with many other varieties of intellectuals. The United States

allied with both shahs, hoping to prevent the spread of Soviet influence. When the Anglo-Iranian Oil Consortium feared Iran would nationalize its oil under nationalist Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh, the United States participated in a plan to return the young Mohammad Reza Shah to power in 1953.

In the 1960s, many American political thinkers predicted that the Shah's modernizing state eventually would democratize. No one imagined that religious elements would defeat the Shah and his terrifying secret service, SAVAK. The Shi'i *`ulama* maintained a certain distance from the state through continued control over religious education in the holy cities of Mashhad and Qum in Iran and in Najaf and Karbala in Iraq. Some clerics opposed the government, however, others, like the last Iranian Grand Ayatullah (a *marja' al-taqlid al-mutlaq*) Burujerdi, were politically quiescent. In contrast, Khomeini responded vociferously to the state's modernizing efforts. He was arrested in 1964 and exiled to Turkey, traveling from there to Iraq in 1965. In addition to Khomeini's opposition to the Shah, a different version of a religious critique based on economic and cultural trends characterized nascent activist Shi'ism. One theme was the growing financial encroachment of the West on Iran as the Shah bought weapons from the United States and the economic situation in the country reflected the deviation of funds that could have aided development, while the presence of many Westerners pushed up rents in Tehran. Another theme was the "Westoxification" of Iranian society, that should be resisted Islamically.

Another locus of support for Shi'i activism came from the merchant bourgeoisie, the more traditional segment known in Iran as the *bazaris*. Merchants do not risk their livelihoods in political ventures frequently.

It is possible that they might not have supported the religious opposition if the Shah had not referred to them as flea-ridden disgraces and punished them through taxes and new regulations.

THE UNITED STATES AND IRAN

The Shah's alienation of other social groups and his Macchiavellian tactics were compounded by his relationship with the United States. First, the United States had helped to return him to his throne. He then used the United States to build up his military and political strength in the Gulf. That tainted the regime. Iran forged good relations with Israel, an additional point of contention for the religious opposition. The Shah's economic ambitions for the country made for trouble as well, as did his imperial image and grand style. Trouble ignited quickly with demonstrations in the late 1970s, and the regime's violent response triggered more demonstrations.⁸³ In retrospect, it is somewhat difficult to determine how American officials viewed the prospect of a Shi'i Islamist take-over of Iran; they apparently did not give any credence to the prospect of revolution until it was too late. Then questions quickly arose as to whether discussions should be held with the opposition, and how the United States should treat long-time allies like the Shah.⁸⁴

A revolution is, by definition, "the forcible overthrow of an established government by a people governed."⁸⁵ That is what took place in Iran after a series of demonstrations and crippling strikes in the oil industry and newspapers in 1978. The Shah departed Iran, and Khomeini triumphantly returned on February 1, 1979.

The ensuing hostage crisis arose out of a struggle between Iranians about the character and “red lines” of the revolution. A cultural war against “imperialism” and Western influence began and heightened from 1979 through 1981. As part of this process, Iranian students took over the American Embassy and seized hostages to protest the Shah’s arrival in the United States for medical treatment. His entry into the United States countered the advice of Ambassador Sullivan to Cyrus Vance, although Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brezinski, and David Rockefeller had lobbied for the Shah’s admittance.⁸⁶ The hostage takers played on paranoid fears that the United States would unseat the new regime, and popular anger that the Shah and his family had escaped Iran with their great wealth intact. To punish these Americans for being “spies” and their country’s close relationship with the Shah, the hostages were held for 444 days, although their captors released five women, eight African-Americans, and more than 30 non-U.S. citizens.

Ayatullah Khomeini, who most likely was unaware of the plan to seize the embassy, fully supported the hostage takers once they had accomplished this action. The seizure of hostages was wildly popular with ordinary Iranians, and the Majlis (the Iranian Parliament) eventually adopted Khomeini’s four demands from the United States.⁸⁷ The hostage crisis powerfully and psychologically affected Americans. The crisis led to a gasoline shortage and rationing. Although official U.S. policy was to refuse to deal with terrorists, a military attempt to rescue the hostages failed and enraged the Iranian public and disappointed Americans. President Jimmy Carter, himself, considered the hostage crisis to be the foremost of three issues leading to his failure to be re-elected.⁸⁸ The United States eventually

negotiated the release of the hostages by promising not to intervene in Iranian affairs, unfreezing \$11 billion in frozen assets,⁸⁹ and freezing the Shah's family's property. The announcement of successful negotiations ending the hostage crisis coincided with President Ronald Reagan's inauguration on January 20, 1981. The hostage release precipitated a struggle between Iranian political forces as well as a showdown between Khomeini and then-President Bani Sadr.

Under President Reagan, the United States was overtly hostile both to Iran and its Islamist ideals, yet its representatives again negotiated with Iran for the lives of U.S. hostages in Lebanon. Iranians suffered from the long war with Iraq, in which the United States, as well as Arab states, supported Saddam Hussein, who initially thought he could seize Iranian territory.

The Clinton administration initially improved trade relations with Iran but subsequently toughened its stance.⁹⁰ In January 1995, President Bill Clinton called for an overthrow of the Iraqi and Iranian governments and reportedly authorized a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) covert operation against Iran because of reports that the Russians were going to build two nuclear power reactors in Iran.⁹¹

Iran's Foreign Policy and Support for Terrorism.

Iranian leaders proclaimed an "Islamic" foreign policy in the sense that they, like other Islamists, view Islamic goals as universal. In the revolutionary Shi'i worldview, Iran was to support the oppressed masses elsewhere, meaning the Shi'a of Lebanon, other Shi'i minorities, but also the Palestinians, who are predominantly Sunni Muslims. Khomeini and his *Hezbe Jumhuriyye Islami* (Islamic Republican

Party, or IRP) explained that the Shah had betrayed Muslims with his support of Israel. In contrast, Iran now supported the Palestinians' revolutionary struggle because Palestine is the *vaqf* (*waqf*, Arabic), or endowment-in-perpetuity (mortmain) of all Muslims, not only Arabs, or Palestinians. It cannot be sacrificed through negotiation.

Iran indirectly supported Iranian Shi'i cleric in Tyre, Imam Musa Sadr's⁹² establishment of the Movement of the Dispossessed in Lebanon in 1974. Then in 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon, setting up a security zone. Iranians supported the growth of Hizbullah, providing funds, training, and a reported 1200 *pasdarans* in the Bika` valley during the 1980s. Iran also has been accused of fomenting mayhem in Saudi Arabia in plots timed during the *hajj*, and the Khobar Towers incident. Earlier the more activist Khomeini regime verbally attacked the House of Saud for its misuse of oil wealth, alliance with the United States – the Great Satan – and because it is a monarchy, an improper form of government.

Iran's Syria connection was forged in 1973 when Musa Sadr issued a *fatwa* legitimizing the Syrian president's `Alawi sect.⁹³ In terms of Khomeini's Islamic foreign policy goals, Hafiz al-Asad was an odd ally, having massacred between 10,000 and 30,000 of his own Islamist agitators, sympathizers, and ordinary citizens in the city of Hama. Demonstrating that its support of Islamic revolution was less important than its need for regional allies, Iran used Syria to counter Iraq's power. Iran maintained a pilgrim traffic to Damascus where Syria supported numerous dissidents, including the anti-Fatah Palestinians, anti-Saddam Iraqis, and anti-Hashemite Jordanians, as well as Hizbullah representatives from neighboring Lebanon.

Iran's regional revolutionary influence was more of a chimera than a reality, perhaps because of the

anti-Shi'a sentiment expressed even within moderate Sunni Islamist entities. What local governments found dangerous was the degree of inspiration their own opposition saw in Iranian revolutionary populism and anti-Americanism. This extended even beyond the Muslim world as was seen in the Salman Rushdie incident.

Shahram Chubin at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy explains that Iran utilized terrorism in the service of its political goals rather extensively through Rafsanjani's tenure as president, but notes a change from 1997 under Khatami. Notably better relations with the Gulf states were formalized in an April 2001 agreement with Saudi Arabia.⁹⁴

While Iran's foreign policy became less proactive, due to the pressures of the Iran-Iraq War, it continued to support Hizbullah rhetorically, though the party has now secured a firm local Lebanese support base. The Palestinian issue is perhaps the exception to a moderating of Islam's regional policies. In this case, reformists or conservatives alike tend to see the struggle of the Palestinians in terms of defensive jihad. Iran's relations with Hamas and Islamic Jihad, or Hizbullah's activities in the Territories are a sore point for the United States. After the eruption of the al-Aqsa *intifadha* in 2000, the Israelis claimed that Iran had shipped some 50 tons of weapons on the ship, *Karine-A*, to the Palestinian Authority. This incident was used to further discredit President Arafat, and showed that Iran had never abandoned its meddling support of terrorist activity despite its quieter profile on other fronts.

Actually, Iraqis also broadly support the Palestinians. Iraqi Shi'a point to Hizbullah as a credible organizing force in Lebanon, as do many Sunnis. So it

is ironic that some Iraqis would accept and propagate America's critique of Iran as a destabilizing force that supports terrorism, and when they do so, often they are expressing explicit political rationales.

Iran's antipathy toward Iraq sharpened because of the long war with that country, but also due to the ideological character of the regime. Azar Nafisi, writer and professor of literature, remembers:

The war with Iraq began that September [1980] and did not end until late July 1988. Everything that happened to us during those 8 years of war, and the direction our lives took afterward, was in some way shaped by this conflict. It was not the worst war in the world, although it left over a million dead and injured. At first the war seemed to pull the divided country together; we were all Iranian and the enemy had attacked our homeland. But even in this, many were not allowed to participate fully. From the regime's point of view, the enemy had attacked not just Iran; it had attacked the Islamic Republic, and it had attacked Islam.

The polarization created by the regime confused every aspect of life. Not only were the forces of God fighting an emissary of Satan, Iraq's Saddam Hussein, but they were also fighting agents of Satan inside the country. At all times, from the very beginning of the revolution and all through the war and after, the Islamic regime never forgot its holy battle against its internal enemies. All forms of criticism were now considered Iraqi-inspired and dangerous to national security. Those groups and individuals without a sense of loyalty to the regime's brand of Islam were excluded from the war effort. They could be killed or sent to the front, but they could not voice their social or political preferences. There were only two forces in the world, the army of God and that of Satan.⁹⁵

CLERICAL AUTHORITY IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC⁹⁶

Khomeini's doctrine of clerically-guided government was not the centuries-old Shi'i approach to political authority. Since the Revolution, however, it has defined the structure of Iran's government and its regional and international foreign policies. Clerical rule came to be identified with Shi'ism, radicalizing the sect still further in the eyes of other Muslims and non-Muslims. In other respects, the Iranian government is modern, and in some ways more democratic, with a weaker executive, than certain Arab nations. The word "democratic" has to be qualified not so much because of the system of Islamic governance, but its particular practices. Nearly 1,000 candidates were disqualified from participating in the elections in Iran. This clearly shows that Iranians desire pluralism, and that is an aspect of democracy.

Under the current system, the Supreme Faqih, currently Khamene'i, advises a President who is elected every 4 years. The Faqih appoints and advises the Council of Guardians. Of these, he directly appoints six *fuqaha* (the clerics qualified to pronounce on Islamic law) and the remaining six members must be lawyers selected by the High Council of Justice (who is also appointed by the Faqih) and approved by a majority vote of the 290 member Islamic Consultative Council (referred to as the Majlis). Every 3 years, half of the members of the Council of Guardians are replaced as each serves 6 years. The Council has veto rights over legislation by the Majlis and can interpret the Constitution, serving in the capacity of a Constitutional Court. Further, the Council could disallow candidates for Parliament and President. The chair of the Council

is Ayatullah Jannati, and the other *fuqaha* members currently are Mohammad Reza Modarresi-Yazdi, Mohammad Momen, Sadegh Larijani, Gholamreza Rezvani, and Mohammad Yazdi. The advocate members of the council are Abbasali Kadh kodai, who is the deputy chair; Ebrahim Azizi; Mohammad Reza Alizadeh; Gholamhossein Elham; Mohsan Esma`ili; and Abbas Ka`bi.

The Faqih also advises the High Council of Justice. The elected President appoints a Cabinet to be approved by the Majlis (the Parliament). When there is a dispute between the Majlis and the Council of Guardians, the matter is referred to the Expediency Discernment Council. This system of Islamic governance revolves around the Faqih. The system, however, does not emanate solely from that single office. Now the locus of power includes the Faqih and the two Councils. In contrast, the presidential office weakened, particularly in the early years of regime infighting when Bani Sadr challenged Khomeini and was forced to flee. Khamene'i, who was technically at the rank of *hujjat-e islam*, was President for two terms until he became the Faqih, when he was elevated artificially to the rank of Ayatullah. A schism within the IRP, Khomeini's party, between militants and traditionalists identified more specifically as *maktabis* and *hojjatieh*, essentially brought this about.

The Iranian conservatives' need to dictate the office of Supreme Faqih essentially has weakened the principle of *vilayat-e faqih* based on merit. Instead, political considerations, which the regime expressed as a need for *tohid* (unity), has constrained pluralism and bolstered censorship. The Shi'i believer can choose his own supreme source of emulation. Thus it would be more logical for the most respected and senior of clerics to be eligible for Supreme Faqih, rather

than selection on the basis of political loyalties. Most characterize Khamene'i as a political appointee because at the time of Khomeini's death in 1989, there were Grand Ayatullahs who outranked him. Khomeini had annointed a successor, Grand Ayatullah Hossein Ali Montazari from 1985-1989, when Khomeini dismissed him from this status and Montazari eventually returned to teaching. Ayatullahs Kho'i, Golpayegani, and Najafi were not sufficiently radical in the eyes of the *maktabi* bloc, and they were in their 80s. Montazari was viewed as a "liberal" though he certainly was not one in terms of Iran's foreign policy, being highly anti-American and supportive of the global Islamic Revolution. His views contrasted with Rafsanjani, and yet he formed an alliance with him.⁹⁷ Since Khamene'i's credentials were disputed, an elderly cleric, Grand Ayatullah Mohammad Ali Araki, was named the *marja'* for Khomeini's followers. The highest ranked Ayatullahs – Najafi, Kho'i, Golpayegani, and Araki – died. That left Tabataba'i, Sistani, Ruhani, and Montazari after 1994. To sum up, the succession of supreme religious and political authority in Iran are likely to reach another difficult impasse; sooner than in Saudi Arabia, but not nearly as soon as could be the case in Iraq. That is because the political edifice of the *vilayat-e faqih*, so strongly influenced by the older anti-Pahlavi revolutionaries, now relies on the neo-conservatives, the next generation of leaders who fought in the Iran-Iraq war.

President Khatami fought to strengthen the Presidency since 1997, differing with Khamene'i about Iran's ability to survive in isolation.⁹⁸ However, his reform challenge was undone by hardliners. The United States would be ill-advised to rely on a revival of the reform movement to bring about regime change in Iran.

The Iranian constitution is similar to France's; however, other areas of law underwent neo-Islamic revision. The inclusion of the *hudud* punishments in the criminal code and traditional (and discriminatory) treatment of women and girls in the criminal and family codes similarly identified Shi'ism with activist Islamism and what the West characterized as a "throwback to medieval Islam." While the new punishments for abortion or sexual offenses are horrifying, the country has managed to legislate the first type of Islamic alimony for wives and has brought its birth rate down by mandating family planning, primarily on the grounds of national economic need.

The Islamic Republic of Iran identifies itself with the Shi'a concern for the oppressed masses and holds that good Islamic governance is the best remedy for that oppression. Yet, certain demographic and economic trends are troubling. Iran's population is 68,688,433 (as compared to Iraq's 27,783,383 as estimated in 2006) and demonstrates a youth bulge, with 26.1 percent of the population age 14 or younger. More than 35 percent of Iran's families live in poverty, and homeless children sleep in the streets of large cities, even in the day hours. While educational levels are higher than in some other countries, still 23 percent are illiterate. Iran had an HIV/ AIDs population of 31,000 in 2001 and a drug problem due to the large number of intravenous drug users of at least 2 million.⁹⁹ These public health concerns stem from Iran's past production and importation of opium and opiates and status as a transit site for heroin from southeast Asia moving to Europe.

Urban migration contributed to poverty prior to the Revolution, and when it accelerated in 1983, the regime decried migration itself, denied rations to migrants, and eventually tried improving rural conditions as a way

of discouraging the growth of the urban poor sector. Squatters, some of whom had acquired living sites during the revolutionary period 1979-81, were attacked by state forces as well.¹⁰⁰ Afghan and Iraqi refugees add to Iran's poverty issues; a fairly conservative estimate gives 952,802 from Afghanistan and 93,173 from Iraq (2005).

In tandem with internal economic concerns, the Iranian media plays up the current misery of Iraqis, arguing that it is the American occupation that has killed so many civilians; impoverished them; and failed to restore security, electricity, and other services. Ayatullah Khamene'i said in a meeting with Jalal Talabani in which he urged a timetable for a U.S. withdrawal: "Iran considers the United States to be responsible for all crimes and terrorist acts in Iraq, and the suffering and misery of the Iraqi people."¹⁰¹

Foreign policy is set primarily by the Supreme Faqih and the National Security Council, along with the Majlis and the Council of Guardians. The Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) currently is headed by 'Ali Larijani,¹⁰² who is simultaneously Iran's chief spokesperson and negotiator on nuclear issues. He, like Ahmadinejad, is close to the Supreme Faqih, Ayatullah Khamenei. The membership of the SNSC includes military leaders from the army and Revolutionary Guard, and top ministry officials. Beyond formal politics, influence on decisionmaking is achieved through informal and quasi-formal networks in Iran, which exist for purely social reasons as well, and are called *dowreh*. Through acknowledged advisory networks, or informal ones, about 600 persons are connected with the Office of the Supreme Faqih.¹⁰³ Among them are important voices on Iran's relationship with Iraq, or on nuclear issues.

Generally there is a far larger clerical presence, in government, and throughout society, than most Westerners are used to thinking about, even though no exact figures are at hand. Estimates from 15 years ago ranged from 90,000 to 300,000 educated clerics, 40,000 religious students, about 60,000 ordinary preachers or religious leaders who had not received specialized training, and possibly some 50,000 to 60,000 others with some degree of training.¹⁰⁴

It also is not entirely clear what role the professional military plays in Iran's decisionmaking, nor do we have an accurate picture of Iran's air, land, and sea capacities. Statistics vary widely, though we are certainly speaking of a larger force than any in the Gulf with an army of approximately 350,000 and some 15,665,725 men fit for military service. Iran's equipment is in disrepair as compared to certain other armies (Israel or Pakistan), and its military technology has lagged behind the West. Iran had acquired Western equipment under the Shah, but its American-made combat aircraft, for example, have been outstepped by neighbors.¹⁰⁵ Iran spent about 4.3 billion dollars in 2003 on its defense budget, roughly 3.3 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP). The populist basis of the revolution has enhanced the political role of the paramilitary, namely, Revolutionary Guards (*Sepah-e pasdaran enghelab-e islami*) formed by Khomeini's decree of May 5, 1979. This security apparatus grew from 4,000 to 350,000 in 1986.¹⁰⁶ Today it possesses a naval and air force as well. An additional paramilitary force that has supported this President is the *basij*. Khomeini formed this militia (the Popular Mobilization Army) early on in November 1979. In 1993, the Ashura Brigades were created in response to antigovernment riots in urban areas and are now estimated at 17,000. Both the IRG

and the *basij* are strong bases of support for President Ahmadinejad.

With the election of President Khatami in 1997, American-Iranian relations improved somewhat. Iranian students began the Do-e Khordad protest movement in response to regime repression. Unfortunately, continuing application of repressive measures took their toll on the movement, while hardliners pressured Khatami to the point that he provided insufficient support to the movement. The hardliners attacked Khatami's allies like Gholamhossein Karbaschi, the popular mayor of Tehran, on corruption charges. Reformers tried to obtain international support, but state security services heightened their techniques of collective and individual intimidation. The regime trend of identifying political enemies as traitors of the Revolution by trying them on trumped up charges continued. In addition to Karbaschi, one could mention Ayatullah Abdullah Nouri, former Minister of the Interior; Ata'ollah Mohajerani, former Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance; former President Rafsanjani's daughter, Faezeh Rafsanjani; Mousavi Khoinha; journalists Abbas Abdi and Akbar Ganji; and numerous authors and publishers.

Iran's Islamic revolution was supposed to bring about social justice and benefits for the poor, and reform aspects of Islamic life. Some social elements benefited from the revolution—loyalty to its values, endeavor to be good Muslims (meaning more observant), yet more modern and rational.¹⁰⁷ Iranian judges rule according to the new Islamic family law, but they also attempt to control men's violence against women by issuing restraining orders and enforcing maintenance payments. The state has bureaucratized elements of Iranian Shi'i practice further, emphasizing the new

character of public space,¹⁰⁸ more rational, rule-bound, and overtly “Islamic.” Supporters of the idea of fomenting Iranian reform from outside point to the fact that the rules and enforced religiosity of the Islamic Republic are not popular with all citizens, especially the youth. It is not at all clear that this is a definitive picture, and the surprise election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the summer 2005 attests to that.

PRESIDENT AHMADINEJAD

Ahmadinejad projects the image of both a *javanmard* (new Islamic man) and a *mardomyar* (a people’s man), ordinary and plain. He appeals to Iranians outside the bases of power, who remain deeply pious, but want to live in better circumstances. The son of a blacksmith, Ahmadinejad was born in Aradan, Iran, in 1956 and raised in a working class neighborhood in east Tehran. He was still a student during the protests against the Shah. He has been charged falsely with being one of the hostage takers or of planning the take-over of the U.S. Embassy in Iran in 1979.¹⁰⁹ The actual hostage takers emphatically denied these rumors,¹¹⁰ which may have been spread by an opposition group, the Mujahidin-e Khalq. He is characterized as a hard-worker, an excellent student, and a talented soccer player. Childhood and student friends say he was obstinate and confident of popular support. After graduating to teaching his own classes, he distinguished himself by wearing a Palestinian headscarf while on campus.¹¹¹ Ahmadinejad served in the *basij* (militia) after the Revolution, then in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps during the Iraq-Iran war. During that conflict, many of Iran’s second-wave revolutionaries came of age. Many belong to the Abadgaran¹¹² (Builders, or Developers of Islamic Iran), a neo-conservative alliance. The Abadgaran,

together with the conservatives, now form a majority in the Majlis, and have contained the reformers, or what some call “the Left” in Iran. Ahmadinejad also has acknowledged his role as a leading member of a different party, the Islamic Revolution Devotees Society.¹¹³

Ahmadinejad earned a doctorate in traffic engineering, became a professor, an advisor in the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, and a governor. He was appointed the Mayor of Tehran on May 3, 2003, and attained a reputation for quiet efficiency that won him the support of Tehran’s poor in the presidential election and a short-listing in the 2004 Mayor of the Year awards. Critics mention that he redesigned the capital while mayor, with the Imam Mahdi’s return in mind, broadening the streets for his return,¹¹⁴ and some in Tehran said he was so conservative that he would have established separate male and female sidewalks, elevators, and graveyards had that been possible. More recently, Ahmadinejad supported women’s attendance of soccer games.¹¹⁵ Like populist leader Egyptian President Gamal abd al-Nasser, his lifestyle reflected his values; he lived in a modest home in his childhood neighborhood and drove a Paykan, Iran’s cheapest car.

He made numerous campaign appearances in mosques and prayer areas where he focused on the needs of the lower classes. He is not a cleric, in fact, he is the first noncleric in the office of the President for a quarter of a century. His speech is understood easily by the Iranian population, unlike the clerics with their references in classical Arabic, and he identifies with their millenarian passions. It is rumored that his list of cabinet members had been dropped into the well at the Jamkaram mosque, the locus of Mahdi-centered worship, according to local custom.¹¹⁶

Ahmadinejad fired many senior financiers, bankers, and senior diplomats, replacing them with more junior personnel frequently with IRG backgrounds, and replaced all governors with his loyalists. These point to the degree of power in his office and connections, though Iran-watchers commented on his naiveté and novice clumsiness. Nevertheless, the Supreme Guide Khamene'i seemingly had wrapped his cloak around him, urging patience.

ISRAEL

Ahmadinejad appears unafraid of conflict or heightened jihad, and wants Iranians to reembrace the international and domestic ideals of the Islamic Revolution. Khomeini significantly overturned the Shah's close alliance with Israel to regain Iran's leadership role in the Muslim world, where Palestine represents a *vaqf*, a religious endowment that cannot be negotiated away even by the Palestinians themselves. And since Khomeini's era, Israel's nuclear profile and continuing hardnosed approach to the Palestinians has troubled and angered Iranians. In this vein, Ahmadinejad attacked Israel as a "tumor" that should be "wiped off the map of the world." This is hardly a new theme, but the timing of these comments and the attention they received were significant. The uproar coincided with growing Muslim anger over Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, and those led an Iranian newspaper to announce a countercontest for cartoons about the Holocaust. All of this might be understood in terms of internal Iranian political jousting. Just prior to the Fall 2005 flurry of interest in Ahmadinejad's anti-Semitism, Khamene'i had granted more power to Rafsanjani, a rival of Ahmadinejad.

The Council of Guardians had decided to meet again with the Europeans regarding the nuclear issue. Ahmadinejad may well have needed to reassert presidential power and reclaim center stage.¹¹⁷

However, Ahmadinejad won the election primarily because he ran on a fairness and anticorruption platform. Many poor and lower-class Iranians voted for him because they want their economic circumstances to improve. A heightened conflict with the West is unlikely to improve these circumstances. For this reason, as well as observations that Iran tends to act in stealth and with calculated rationality rather than Islamic revolutionary zeal, some analysts suggested that even this president will retreat from brinkmanship.

NUCLEAR IRAN

Iran's decision to pursue the development of nuclear technology further complicates its global and regional future. A weak Iraq is a close target for Iran. A nuclear Iran is a red flag to Israel. While Israel might strike Iran, it could not do so without American assistance. Were Iran to counter by attempting to strike Israel, it might well hit Palestinians. The European nations' efforts to engage Iran on this issue owe something to the interest that they have in profitable trade with Iran. Russia and China's attitudes toward Iranian proliferation have a relationship to Iran's role as oil producer.

Iran's aim to obtain nuclear technology and, though unacknowledged, efforts to develop nuclear weapons technology demonstrates the concerted effect that external pressures can have on nation-states. Iran has discussed its right to nuclear energy, not nuclear weapons. Basically, it states that one day its energy reserves will be depleted, and it needs to create alternatives.

What role does Iraq play here? First, Iran's cry of "rough neighborhood" has changed in that Saddam Husayn's intense anti-Iranian policies are no more. However, the U.S. presence in Iraq and in Afghanistan on Iran's other border places Iran in a strategic sandwich. Even with an eventual American withdrawal from Iraq, that country's army is going to be a very large one. Iranians can reason that Iraq's new government may wish to revive a nuclear program if they continue their own efforts. What we need to keep in mind is how Iranian influence in Iraq can be affected by the prospect of a nuclear Iran, now and in the future.

Background.

Iran's nuclear program grew from Muhammad Reza Shah's vision of Iran as the prime military power in the Gulf region. He built up a military arsenal via petrodollars and actively funded opposition in Iraq, including Jalal Talebani and his Kurdish supporters, and supported the Sultan of Oman and the royalists in Yemen. Iran's nuclear research program goes back to the 1960s. In 1967, a five megawatt thermal research reactor at the Tehran Research Center was established and supplied by the United States, then an ally of Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi. The Americans trained Iranian technicians as well. Nuclear power and weapons development continued with the assistance of Germany, and later China and Russia, though the United States ended all nuclear agreements with Iran in 1979.

The Bushehr nuclear facility dates to 1974 and was constructed by the German Siemens firm. It was nearly completed by the Islamic Revolution, but bombed during the Iran-Iraq war. Minatom, the

Russian Ministry of Atomic Energy, finally agreed to finish the planned two reactors in an \$800 million dollar agreement, which essentially meant building new reactors. Bushehr was to be a light water facility, with low-enriched uranium to be provided by Russia. President Clinton attempted to obstruct the deal and then imposed sanctions on Iran.

Iran signed nuclear cooperation agreements with Pakistan in 1987 and with China and the Soviet Union in 1990.¹¹⁸ In 2002, an Iranian opposition group, Mujahidin-e Khalq, held a press conference to reveal news of two facilities in Iraq, a heavy-water production plant at Arak and a uranium-enrichment facility at Natanz. The very fact of a uranium enrichment facility implied Iran's possession of gas centrifuge technology. All of this, along with the fact that buildings at Natanz were being constructed underground and hardened, strengthened the sense that Iran could not be trusted. It was only after the public "outing" of the Arak and Natanz sites that the Iranians acknowledged them and announced their intent to process their own fuel. By 2003, they had completed a fuel fabrication plant. In 2004, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of the United Nations (UN) met to discuss Iranian issues, and Director General Muhammad El Baradei provided a report on Iran's possible treaty violations in November 2004. As Iran responded to the concerns of the European Union (EU) and IAEA regarding its nuclear program, it continuously restated its bottom line – that Iran has the right to develop a peaceful nuclear energy program as well as enrichment capacity.¹¹⁹ The Iranian Majlis approved a bill that would allow Iran to block inspections if the IAEA were to refer the country to the UN Security Council for sanctions.¹²⁰

Incidentally, *fatwas* against use of nuclear weapons frequently are attributed to the late Ayatullah Khomeini,

but he did not oppose the development of nuclear energy alternatives. Iran's Foreign Ministry officials also refer to a *fatwa* of Ayatullah Khamene'i disallowing nuclear weapons.¹²¹ Recently, cleric Mohsen Garavian, a disciple of Ayatullah Mesbah-Yazdi, has stated that it is only "natural" that Iran should have nuclear bombs as a "countermeasure" to other nuclear powers.¹²² The principle that extreme measures are permitted in defensive jihad underlies this statement.

Has the ascent of Iran's neoconservatives worsened the issue? Was Iran more malleable to European, if not American, concerns under Khatami? Would it have been easier to resolve the nuclear issue if Rafsanjani and not Ahmadinejad were President? Ahmadinejad appeared far less concerned with improving relations with the United States in his first year in office. However, if we compare Khatami, Rafsanjani, and Ahmadinejad and the Iranian nuclear issue, we see that the presidential office basically is a reflection of the issues's deep importance to the regime. President Khatami's public statements gradually deteriorated from hopeful pledges to open Iran to the outside world and be less hostile to the West to extremely volatile statements nearer the end of his term when he, too, spoke forcefully, declaring Iran's sovereign rights to pursue its uranium enrichment if it so chose in February 2005. Had Rafsanjani been elected, he may not have been able to avoid the nationalist bottom line, either.¹²³

In spring 2006, the Iranians defiantly revealed that they had enriched uranium. The IAEA documented that Iran had produced uranium hexafluoride sufficient for 20 nuclear weapons and that it had moved from 10 machine and 20 machine cascades up to a 164-machine cascade (the feeding process of UF₆ into centrifuges),

assembling two more 164-machine cascades. Despite these and other accomplishments, experts point out that Iran cut corners in its research and development process, and therefore would require more time now for development and testing.¹²⁴ At issue is the perception that Iran wished to give that its progress in enrichment was inexorable, and, second, that the time frame towards an actual weapon might be further off than thought. David Albright projected about 3 years toward a single nuclear weapon (2009), whereas John Negroponte, Director of National Intelligence, has suggested a lengthier waiting period.¹²⁵

Ahmadinejad wrote an 18-page letter directly to President Bush breaking with a diplomatic embargo on contact with the Americans. The letter was described in the American press as being full of religious language and unclear intent. It addresses President Bush as a proponent of Christian values, questions America's foreign policy in general, its actions in Iraq, commitment to Israel, and attitude toward Iran's nuclear quest. Ahmadinejad decries the actions of September 11, 2001 (9/11), but says that the U.S. response to 9/11 is unsatisfactory and claims that "liberalism and Western style democracy have not been able to help realize the ideals of humanity"; instead people now await the will of God.¹²⁶ Confusing as this communication may have been, it effectively paved the way for other Iranians to address the United States directly and possibly to meet with Americans, something that had been outlawed by the Revolution. In fact, this proscription had been violated earlier during the Reagan administration in the arms for hostages deal, but that, one could argue, was behind the scenes, not an executive communication.

As the diplomatic dance with Europe continued, opponents to negotiations with Iran reminded the

world that it has played for time before. It could be continuing its scientific process over the summer 2006. An agreement might be unattainable. Or Iran may well agree and then default. Those who argue for some form of negotiation in addition to containment, or “rollback”¹²⁷ and deterrence, also suggest grave implications for Western interests from Iran’s nuclear ambitions. First, Iran might be less vulnerable to U.S. conventional force, and, second, Iran’s program cannot but encourage proliferation elsewhere.¹²⁸ In other words, the most obvious concerns about Iran’s nuclear program have little relationship to the ideological character of the state.¹²⁹ One of these particular analysts suggests that the “West” offer butter for guns (but be willing to conduct an air campaign against the nuclear facilities, or otherwise pursue containment).¹³⁰ And the European nations most interested in Iran economically have concurred with the former policy.

One source of anxiety concerning Iran’s intentions in Iraq is the threat a nuclear Iran will pose to Iraq. On one level that threat will be no more than its conventional counterpart since Iran is most likely developing nuclear power in order to deter, not to utilize. But will the achievement of nuclear power secure Iran a higher level of influence in Iraq?

Iran’s existing rationale for pursuing nuclear activities has been somewhat heightened by American policy in Iraq. The “rough neighborhood” argument fits in with new Iranian concerns about the large American military presence in Iraq and its degree of permanence, and the size of the Iraqi force that Americans are training today. In other words, the neighborhood already was rough, with Israeli nuclear capacity in place and the large conventional U.S. forces bolstering armies to the west and the east of Iran, make the country

more anxious. The proponents of the New Middle East argue that Iran is worried about the spectacle of democratic freedoms in Iraq or Afghanistan on its own people. Perhaps. But security concerns are more of a motivation.

When asked to identify his greatest concern with Iran, President Bush said he was concerned about “having a nuclear weapon in the midst of the Middle East,” “political blackmail,” and that “they would harm our ally, Israel.”¹³¹ One wonders if Iran would target Israel if that meant significant loss of Palestinian lives. A concern about a further race by other countries for weapons is hard to gauge as the Saudi, Egyptian, Syrian, and Turkish programs have been analyzed, but some sources query whether Pakistani scientist, A. Q. Khan, might not have illicitly supplied one of them technology as he did for Iran and Libya.¹³²

Certainly, in the U.S. formulation of responses to Iran’s nuclear program, Iraq’s (like Afghanistan’s) vulnerability needs to be kept in mind. Here, some experts suggest that the available options are all problematic, as is a failure to respond. Considered responses to Iran include: a) sanctions; b) military responses, from limited strikes ranging all the way to regime change; c) broader negotiations in which Iran might be offered noninterference (and no regime change); and, d) containment.

Anthony Cordesman and Khalid Al-Rodhan, like other experts, explored the viability of various responses. Most importantly, they suggest that the effect of economic sanctions are far from certain, since there is no reason for certain countries to comply with them.¹³³ European nations—specifically Italy, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom (UK) as well as Japan, Russia, and China—would likely lose a great

deal of money if they ceased exporting to Iran and importing oil from it.¹³⁴ Other countries, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, are unlikely to support sanctions, though for strategic rather than economic reasons.¹³⁵ Existing sanctions against Iran in place since the revolution did not accomplish their goals.¹³⁶

Problems with targeting Iran's nuclear facilities make the option of military strikes more complicated and less attractive than it might otherwise be. Military strikes, rather than sanctions, are more likely to generate some kind of Iranian response to the United States in Iraq, and some experts then cite the existing Iranian influence in Shi'i entities there, including militias, as a serious concern.¹³⁷ Ken Pollack points out that military action could empower Iran's hardliners, illustrating their need for nuclear weapons.¹³⁸ Further, it would anger and thus unite Iranians against America and any allies. He argues that sanctions will work best because of Iran's dire economic situation and need for currently profitable markets. However, some Iranians say that the country is not in such bad shape, with growth at 5.5 percent per year and a doubling of GDP per capita in the last 5 years. The country possesses a \$10 billion stabilization fund and other resources. If Iran is not so desperate economically, then Pollock's proposed "butter for guns" solution, threatening severe sanctions if Iran will not cease its nuclear program, may fail.

If these alternatives are unattractive, nonaction also is problematic. Should Iran proceed to nuclear capabilities, some experts believe that Saudi Arabia or Egypt may heighten efforts to obtain nuclear weapons. Further negotiations with heightened incentives to cease the nuclear enrichment process and disincentives toward its continuation therefore make sense, at least at this time of writing.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Iran's influence in Iraq is not a direct outcome of tense Iran-U.S. relations nor the showdown over Iranian nuclear ambitions. It could, however, take on more markedly negative aspects of this conflict than at present. As we have noted in some detail, the new importance of the Iraqi Shi'a should not be misread as a Shi'i plot, or master-plan for the region. On the contrary, every possible avenue for Shi'i-Sunni accommodation and healing needs to be mustered up for an Iraq that will benefit all of its people.

The dynamics between Iran and the United States and Iraq and the United States are symptomatic of the globalization of foreign policy, the "new world order," and the ambitions for a New Middle East. They contrast with centuries of Iranian-Mesopotamian rivalry, symbiosis, and sometime synthesis. Ambassador Khalilzad is on the right track in discouraging the zero-sum games of the past in the pattern of Middle Eastern proxy cold wars, and in encouraging communication that would aid the development of both neighbors, Iran and Iraq.

There is no easy answer to the prospect of Iran's nuclear ambitions. One can, however, see that it is centered in Iran proper, and not in its alleged "satellites," the various Shi'i groups in Iraq that maintain Iranian connections or support.

We may suggest the following recommendations:

1. More clearly differentiate between Iraqi, Iranian, and Shi'i interests. When allies of the United States do not distinguish these factors clearly, use the advice of experts and analysts to understand their political purposes.

2. Take all steps possible to diminish intersectarian conflict in Iraq. First, understand it as a process radiating outwards to the region, not vice-versa.

Second, establish city and town-based initiatives that can meet regularly, offer funds to those displaced through sectarian violence, repress vengeance killings through peer mediation, moderate public discourse, and seriously engage and control militia activities.

3. Continue monitoring the relationship of Shi'i parties and entities with Iran, but acknowledge their independence and the separation between U.S. and Iraqi policy formation.

4. Negotiate Iraq's existing border issues with Iran, serious matters concerning the border control and pilgrim travel. The body doing so could continue to meet on an ad-hoc basis to address bilateral concerns usefully.

5. Be cognizant that continuing ambiguity as to Iran's progress on the nuclear front, or failure to strike a deal with Iran, will lead to an increase in Sunni vs. Shi'a tensions and invective, despite that in this monograph we have tried to point out the relative independence of the issues of sectarianism, bilateral tensions, and Iran's nuclear ambitions.

6. Recognize Iraqi vulnerabilities in any consideration of preemptive or punitive strikes on Iran.

7. Continue to pursue diplomatic negotiations as avidly as possible, even if they require more time than desired since the alternatives are either unlikely to dissuade Iran from its intent or would present an extremely serious threat to peace and stability in the region as a whole.

8. Do not hold high expectations for indigenously generated regime transformation in Iran at this time. Rather, craft policy that will more directly engage the existing regime.

9. Consider carefully the risks and implications of regime transformation via military means carried

forward with the justification of a nuclear threat in Iran. Such a policy would most likely mean U.S. unilateral action or a very limited alliance, perhaps with Israel, the UK, and possibly Australia.

ENDNOTES

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3. Mahan Abedin, "Amrika-ha midonad har intikhabat-ye dar `Iraq shi`'yan hastand," *Mehr News*, January 3, 2005, www.mehrnews.com/fa/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=271504.

4. "Survey of Iraqi Public Opinion," International Republican Institute, July 9-July 14, 2005, www.iri.org/pdfs/08-10-05-Iraqpercent20pollpercent20presentation.ppt.

5. Ashraf Khalil, "Religion Again Holds Sway Among Shiite Voters," *Los Angeles Times*, December 16, 2005.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Robin Wright and Peter Baker, "Iraq, Jordan See Threat to Election from Iran," *Washington Post*, December 8, 2004.

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9. Fred Lawson analyzes the tactics and different groups involved in Bahrain's 1994-98 Shi'a uprising, a serious event, but one that primarily featured protesting of local conditions. Fred Lawson, "Repertoires of Contention in Contemporary Bahrain," Quintan Wiktorowicz, ed., *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement*

Theory Approach, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. Attributing the Bahraini Shi'a organization solely to Tehran, either then or now, could be a bit of a red herring.

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15. Amr Hamzawy, "Arab Liberals Unite!" *Al-Ahram Weekly*, February 2-6, 2006, reprinted by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, www.carnegieendowment.org/publications.

16. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in an interview with Wolf Blitzer, CNN, March 25, 2006.

17. Robert Hillenbrand, a professor of Islamic art, explained that a parallel to this mosque might be that of St. James at Santiago de Compostela; BBC, February 22, 2006. It is spiritually important because the 10th and 11th Imams died in Samarra, and the 12th Imam, the Imam Mahdi disappeared here.

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21. Lionel Beehner, "U.S. Intervention in Iraqi Politics," Council on Foreign Relations, March 30, 2006-09-01, *www.cfr.org/publication/10314*.

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49. Vali Nasr.

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52. Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad Is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985, pp. 52, 62.

53. In *Minhaj al-sunnat al-nabawiyya fi naqd kalam al-Shi`at al-qadariyyah* (*The Way of the Prophetic Tradition in the Critique of the Theology of Qadari Shi`ism*), which is a response to the renowned Shi'a cleric of that era, al-Hilli, who had written *Minhaj al-sunnah fi ma`rifat al-imamah* (*The Way of the Tradition in Understanding the Imamate*).

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62. Samir Khalil, *Republic of Fear: The Inside Story of Saddam's Iraq*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1989, pp. 154-155.

63. Maryam Elahi, "The Rights of the Child under Islamic Law: Prohibition of the Child Soldier," in Elizabeth Fernea, ed., *Children in the Muslim Middle East*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995, pp. 172-173. Khomeini issued a *fatwa* in 1982 allowing children to enlist in the army without informing their parents.

64. This might seem peculiar to non-Muslim readers, but prior to the extensive media coverage of Sunni-Shi'i strife and certainly in Iraq of the 1980s, an Iraqi (like a Saudi, Lebanese, or Bahraini) identified himself as being a Muslim, not a Sunni or Shi'i, or Wahhabi, or Akhbari). In fact, an individual would most probably volunteer information about her geographic origin; natal town, neighborhood, or village. A local would often, but not always, be able to determine her sect from her family or personal name.

65. Anti-Shi'i statements are heard so commonly in the Muslim community today that utterly conflate the sect with Iran, and such a high degree of ignorance on this issue is evident in the professions, including the military, that I thought it necessary to include this rather lengthy explanation of the sect in this monograph.

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71. Khalil, pp. 19, 135-136.

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74. Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1990, p. 20.

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77. Wiley, *The Islamic Movement*, pp. 31-44; and Jabar. Also see Hanna Batatu, "Shi'i Organizations in Iraq: Al-Da'wah al-Islamiyah and al-Mujahidin," in Juan Cole and Nikki Keddie, eds., *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.

78. Jabar, pp. 217-219.

79. The historic name, Persia, does not apply to all of Iran nor all of its people, as not all originate in the province of Fars. The majority or 51 percent are Persians in the ethnic and linguistic sense, but Azeris, at 23 percent, are Turkic. Other minorities are the Kurds (7 percent), Gilanis and Mazandarani (8 percent), Arabs (3 percent), tribal groups like the Bakhtiari, Luri, Baluchi and Qashqai (about 5 percent), and Turkmen (2 percent).

80. Anti-Shi'a rhetoric regarding the conversion of Iran's Sunnis is provided by Shaykh Abd al-Rahman al-Baluchi. His sense of history is also plagued with polemical language: "However, the Safawids conspired with the crusaders and the imperialists to

halt the Islamic expansion into France and Vienna," "Plight of the Sunnis in Iran," *al-Jamiat*, Vol. 3, No. 9, n.d.

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83. Zuhur, *The Middle East*, pp. 212-213.

84. Michael Ledeen and William Lewis, *Debacle: The American Failure in Iran*, New York: Vintage Books, 1982, pp. 61-63, 65-96.

85. *Random House Dictionary*, New York: Ballantine, 1980, p. 757.

86. Two fierce arguments swirled on the fate of the Shah and whether U.S. diplomacy in Iran could have led to a different outcome. See William H. Sullivan (former ambassador to Iran), *Mission to Iran*, New York: Norton, 1981; Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America's Tragic Encounter with Iran*, New York: Random House, 1995; William J. Daugherty (one of the hostages), "A Look Back," *AmericanDiplomacy.org*, March 16, 2003; and Marvin Zonis, "Someone Else's Problem," *New York Times*, July 6, 2006, which is a review article on William Shawcross, *The Shah's Last Ride: The Fate of An Ally*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

87. The four demands were that the Shah's wealth should be returned to Iran; all financial claims against Iran be dropped; Iranian assets would be unfrozen by the United States; and the United States was to promise not to intervene in Iran. David Menashri, *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution*, New York; Holmes and Meier, 1990, pp. 204-205, also see pp. 146-149, 153.

88. W. Carl Biven, *Jimmy Carter's Economy: Policy in an Age of Limits*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2002. "Domestically, Carter's inability to respond effectively to the Islamic Republic of Iran – let alone free the U.S. hostages there – coupled with his failure to communicate his policy on Iran and on the hostages in particular to the American public, became one of the main rocks on which his presidential reelection bid crashed." Fawaz Gerges, *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 60.

See also Michael Ledeen and William H. Lewis, "Carter and the Fall of the Shah," *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 1980.

89. Of the \$11 billion, about \$5 billion was returned to Iran, with the remainder repaying loans or was held to cover possible claims and damages against Iranians.

90. Presidential responses to Islamism are reviewed usefully by Fawaz Gerges, *America and Political Islam: Clash of Interests or Clash of Cultures?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

91. *Ibid.*

92. Musa Sadr, a prominent cleric, political leader, and philosopher trained by Tabataba'i, cleric and political leader born in Qum, Iran, went to Tyre, Lebanon, in 1960, and was also associated with the founding of the first Shi'ite political party, AMAL. Due to his disappearance in or in transit to Libya in 1978, he is regarded as a martyr and a key spiritual figure. Fuad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986. Intermarriage between Lebanese, Iranian, and Iraqi clerical families is common, and Imam Musa's niece is former Iranian President's Rafsanjani's wife, while his cousin was the late Ayatullah Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr of Iraq.

93. Abbas William Samii, "Syria and Iran: An Enduring Axis," *Mideast Monitor*, Vol. 1, No. 2, April/May 2006, www.mideastmonitor.org/issues/0604/0604_4.htm.

94. Shahram Chubin, *Whither Iran? Reform, Domestic Politics and National Security*, London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2002, pp. 92-93.

95. Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, New York: Random House, 2004, pp. 158-159.

96. Material in this section of the monograph has been previously published as "Orgoglio Iranio" ("Ahmadinejad: The People's Man and the Iranian Dilemma,") in *Rivista di Intelligence*.

97. Homa Omid, *Islam and the Post-Revolutionary State in Iran*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994, pp. 135-138.

98. Chubin, pp. 24-26.

99. Central Intelligence Agency, "Iran," *The World Factbook*, www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html.

100. Asef Bayat, *Poor People's Movements in Iran: Street Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, pp. 101-108.

101. "Iran Tells Baghdad to Push U.S. Out," *Washington Times*, November 23, 2005.

102. Larijani is connected closely with leading clerics as the son of Ayatullah Hashim Amoli and the son-in law of the late Ayatullah Mortaza, Motahhari. One of his brothers, Sadegh, is a member of the Council of Guardians, and two others are Iran's foreign service. He ran for President in the 2005 elections but was less popular than Ahmadinejad or Mohammad Ghalibaf, receiving only 5.9 percent of the vote despite his centrality to the neoconservatives. His blog diary was posted on Jamjam in preparation to the elections and is quite revealing. See *www.jamejamonline.ir/shownews2.asp?n=65634&t=feet*.

103. Abbas William Samii, "The Iranian Nuclear Issue and Informal Networks," *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 59, No. 1, Winter 2006.

104. *Ibid.*

105. Statistics in this section are mainly from CIA open sources. On equipment, see Mahan Abedin, "Iranian Public Opinion and the Military Stand-Off," *Middle East Monitor*, Vol. 1, No. 2, April/May 2006.

106. Mohammad-Reza Djalali, *Diplomatie Islamique: Strategie internationale du khomeynisme*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989, pp. 94-95.

107. Fariba Adelkhah, *Being Modern in Iran*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

108. *Ibid.*

109. "Iran Victor 'Kidnap Role' Probe," *BBC News*, June 10, 2005. "Sources: CIA Finds Iranian President Likely Not Hostage-Taker," *cnn.com*, August 12, 2005. Most sources who spread this rumor apparently hoped to discredit Ahmadinejad prior to, or shortly after the June 2005 election. Certain non-Western sources repeated these allegations. For example, Wikipedia relies on information from *Al Jazeera* "Profile," June 19, 2005.

110. Student leaders from those days, Abbas Abdi and Ibrahim Asgharzadeh, who in no way support Ahmadinejad, in addition to three other student leaders, denied that he took part in the action or played any leading role. *New York Times*, July 1, 2005; *Washington Post*, July 1 2005; "Iran Victor 'Kidnap Role' Probe."

111. Iason Athanasiadis, "Ahmadinejad: A Study in Obstinacy," *Asia Times*, May 19, 2006.

112. www.abadgaran.ir/.
113. Abbas William Samii, "The Iranian Nuclear Issue and Informal Networks."
114. Scott Peterson, "Waiting for the Rapture in Iran," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 21, 2005. The Imam Mahdi (the Twelfth Imam, the Guided One) will appear to lead the Muslims before the Day of Resurrection and fight alongside a returned Jesus against the Anti-Christ.
115. Athanasiadis.
116. Peterson.
117. Karim Sadjapour and Ray Takeyh, "Behind Iran's Hard-line on Israel," *Boston Globe*, December 23, 2005.
118. For details on Iran's military ties to China and purchases of hardware, see Bates Gill, "Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: The Dynamics of Chinese Nonproliferation and Arms Control Policy-Making in an Era of Reform," in David M. Lampton, ed., *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001; and Richard Russell, "China's WMD Foot in the Greater Middle East's Door," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 3, September 2005, who cites Gill in this segment.
119. Erich Marquardt, "Iran's 'Right to Enrich' Uranium," *Asia Times*, March 12, 2004; Alissa J. Rubin "Iran Builds Support for Right to Nuclear Power," *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 2006.
120. Associated Press, "Iran May Block Nuclear Inspections," November 20, 2005.
121. Hamid Reza Assefi, *Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, September 12, 2004; "Iran, U.S. Nuclear Fears Overblown," *Los Angeles Times*, November 5, 2004.
122. *Sunday Telegraph*, February 19, 2002.
123. International Crisis Group, "Iran: What Does Ahmadi-Nejad's Victory Mean?" *Middle East Briefing* No. 18, Tehran/Brussels, August 4, 2005, pp. 12-13.
124. Robert Einhorn, "The Iran Nuclear Issue," Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, May 17, 2006. Available at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, p. 3.

125. David Albright and Corey Hinderstein, "The Clock is Ticking, But How Fast?" The Institute for Science and International Security, March 27, 2006; Einhorn, p. 4.

126. "La lettre de Mahmoud Ahmadinejad á George W, Bush," *Le Monde*, May 5, 2006.

127. Judith S. Yaphe and Charles D Lutes, "Reassessing the Implications of a Nuclear-Armed Iran," McNair Paper 69, Washington, DC: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 2005.

128. Kenneth Pollack, " A Multilateral Approach to Iran," in Ivo Daalder, Nicole Gnesotto and Philip Gordon, eds., *Crescent of Crisis: U.S.-European Strategy for the Greater Middle East*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 2006, p. 16; and Yaphe and Lutes, pp. 30-31. Yaphe and Lutes present various possible scenarios if Iran achieves nuclear weapons á la Iraq (preemptive strike), North Korea (Iran cheats), or India (the world condemns Iran but does nothing).

129. Bruno Tertrais, "The Iranian Nuclear Crisis," in Dallder, Gnesotto, and Gordon.

130. Pollack, "A Multilateral Approach."

131. Transcript of Larry King with President and Mrs. Bush. Available at *www.cnn.com*, July 6, 2006.

132. Wyn Q. Bowen and Joanna Kidd, "The Nuclear Capabilities and Ambitions of Iran's Neighbors," in Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson, eds., *Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005, p. 52.

133. Anthony Cordesman and Khalid Al-Rodhan, "Iranian Nuclear Weapons? The Options if Diplomacy Fails," Draft, April 7, 2006, Center for Strategic and International Studies, pp. 15-18, 29.

134. George Perkovitch with Silvia Manzanero, "Iran Gets the Bomb—Then What?" in Henry Sokolski and Patrick Clawson, eds., pp. 185-189.

135. Cordesman and Al-Rodhan, p. 17.

136. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

137. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-38.

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